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Soviet Literature

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CONSTANTINE FEDIN

NO ORDINARY SUMMER

(Continued) [1]

That laugh which Izvekov seemed to address to himself and which was at the same time ridiculing and shy, brought back to Dibich's mind that one link that was missing, that point which was required to revive his memories and in an instant he not only recognized Izvekov as his soldier but recalled everything that had been connected with Lomov's name in the past. . . .

It had happened on the Southwestern Front at the time when Brusilov's army had launched the May offensive that left an incurable wound in the spirit of the Austro-Hungarian troops and had been a source of exultation for the Russian soldiers giving them faith in the inexhaustibility of the strength of the people.

Dibich had fought his way forward over two hundred versts as company commander. At the end of the march the battalion commander had been seriously wounded and Dibich, recently awarded the Order of St. Anna, was appointed in his place. By this time the Austrians had been replaced by Germans on many sectors; the Germans were coming to the help of their battered allies who were retreating, panic-stricken. The Germans were unable to re-establish the front that the Russians had pierced and hopelessly disrupted—they set themselves the task of preventing any further widening of the breach that menaced their flank in the north and the Austro-Hungarian flank in the south. German infantry transferred from the West after the experience of fighting against the French were hurled into counterattacks against Russian regiments that were feeling a shortage of replenishments after long battles and marches. The Germans managed to re-establish the continuity of the front and defended with determination their new lines, in places trying to regain important positions from the Russians, stubbornly renewing attacks if they did not bring results at once.

Dibich's battalion felt that they were faced by a different enemy when at dawn the height they had captured on the previous evening was suddenly subjected to point-blank fire from light artillery such as the Austrians had not possessed. Dibich had been warned by the regimental staff that his neighbours on the left and the right were faced by Germans, that a counterattack was to be expected and that the height must be held. Before the artillery fire began he had given orders to the men to dig themselves in. Running from cover to cover under fire, he had inspected the battalion positions and ordered the sixth company to occupy the woods on the summit of the hill, to act as a reserve and prepare there reserve lines of defence. He did not reply to the German fire but made active preparations to repulse an attack, using all available forces to observe enemy positions and enemy fire. The activities of the Germans, however, were limited to that unexpected artillery barrage, following which the whole morning and then the rest of the day were so quiet that Dibich got the impression that the enemy has decided that the fuss with which he had announced his arrival was quite sufficient.

Believing a night attack to be a possible development, Dibich sent for his company commanders to assemble in the dugout which was still uncompleted and asked for reports on the situation with the work on the fortification of

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[1] See *Soviet Literature*, No. 8, 1947.

the hill, intending to accelerate the work. He did not regard the officers so much as his subordinates as his recent equals and friends, and from their conversation, therefore, it was easy to see that they, like himself, were unable to make head or tail of the enemy's confusing tactics and were quite noticeably worried. It was admitted that the most important thing under these circumstances was reconnaissance, and Dibich decided that with the onset of darkness each of the companies, with the exception of the sixth reserve company would send out reconnaissance parties in their own sectors for the purpose of penetrating into the nearest enemy positions and noiselessly seizing a prisoner who might give information.

After this decision had been made, the commander of the sixth company, Dibich's opponent at chess and also a lieutenant of the reserve, remained behind at the door of the dugout and told Dibich that he had something unpleasant to report: a private named Lomov had come to the company with the last reinforcements and the sergeant major had reported that when the company was in bivouac Lomov had been talking with the soldiers about the aimlessness of the war as far as the common people were concerned. Lomov was a newly-mobilized man who had been trained in Nizhni-Novgorod, before mobilization had worked as a draughtsman at the Sormovo plant, was well educated and—as the sharp nose of the sergeant major could smell—things were not quite right with him.

"All right," said Dibich, thoughtfully, "send him out scouting to begin with, perhaps that will clear his brain. I will order him out in company with an experienced scout."

Their worry about the perpetual mysterious silence grew intolerably during the night. Low black clouds reached right down to the dark earth. At the time the scouting parties went out it was so dark they could not see their hands before their faces. After a short time several shots were fired somewhere away to Dibich's right and the rifle fire was immediately supported by a machine gun. Almost simultaneously there came a rapid exchange of musketry from the left. Dibich realized that the firing had been caused by his reconnaissance parties and in one hour of waiting in the darkness of the night he burnt more tobacco than he would normally smoke in a whole day.

When a runner came stumbling into his dugout and reported that a prisoner had been taken and that it was a German, Dibich jumped about like a little boy, put his arms round the soldier and shouted:

"Quick, quick! Bring him here to me! And a new pair of boots for those who captured him—no, no, I'll give them extra leave and damn them! Well done!"

After the captured German had been interrogated and sent to headquarters under escort on a wagon, Dibich discovered to whom he had so generously promised extra leave. It turned out to be that very same new scout from the sixth company that had had the good luck to capture a live German and what was more he had done it alone and under exceptional circumstances.

Lomov had crept out of the trench at the appointed time with a group of six and crept down the slope of the hill. For a hundred yards or so there was a gentle slope covered with fresh young grass leading to a shallow gully in which flowed a little rivulet, almost a stream, in fact. The gully was overgrown with alders and bird cherry. Beyond the gully there was more grassland for about a hundred yards, as clean and fresh as the first and ending in a low ridge. The enemy's front-line defences were expected to be on this ridge, an objective that was to be reached unnoticed. What they would meet with there, nobody knew.

In command of the party was a sergeant who did not like the idea that he had been given an inexperienced soldier and one from another company at that. He only had time enough to ask Lomov his name and to tell him—"stick close behind me!" As soon as they began their descent of the slope the party broke up into pairs, Lomov and the sergeant forming the centre pair; the outside pairs gradually moved farther and farther away to the left and right so that if they could have been seen they would have been like an opening fan that gradually widens. There was, however, nothing to be seen. As soon as the flank pairs crawled away Lomov lost sight of their dark, humped figures on the ground, and the rustle of their movements in the grass became fainter and fainter until it died away altogether.

Lomov could soon hear only the ser-

geant and himself—the dull, faint sounds of knees and fists making contact with the earth, an occasional crackle of a dry stalk being broken, fast breathing through open mouths, the heavy sound of the slings of their rifles rubbing over the grass—more sensed than actually heard; there was a constant hammering in the ears, one hammer blow driving on the one before it—the beating of their own hearts! The boundless world of darkness was tensely silent but it was a silence that was filled with the life of the field and the invisible population of the earth and the grass. But this was another stratum of sound, superimposed on the noise of the beating heart, and which the ear could define in the silence.

Lomov had no sooner touched the ground with his hands and knees than he became wet with dew and the moisture soon began to penetrate the whole of his clothing, so that he soon had the feeling that he was crawling in water, his face became wet, and his chest, and his back, the only difference being that he was cold from the ground and hot from his back—the perspiration on his back was like warm dew. In his fist he held clenched a pair of long wire cutters in case the enemy had found time to put up wire in front of his trenches. He found the cutters a great inconvenience because whenever he pressed on his fists the steel cut into his fingers and palm but he would not risk thrusting them into his belt, he was afraid they would slip out into the grass. The idea entered his head that there was no need to crawl at all, he would walk at full height and nobody would see him. But he corrected himself immediately—if a rocket were to go up or a searchlight were to be turned on a soldier walking at full height, he would immediately be shot down. At the same time he remembered that he must not decide for himself any more than he could object when he had unexpectedly been ordered to go out on reconnaissance and thought that this was probably the end of everything.

Lomov seemed to have been crawling for a long time and must be quite near the gully when the twittering of a nightingale told him that the gully was still some distance away. The twitter gave way to a trill, to whistling and gurgling—Lomov counted another dozen bursts of song before the sergeant who was breathing heavily beside him muttered in a whisper—"Ach, you son of a bitch!" and sighed deeply with a sob that also had a birdlike sound to it.

The voice of the nightingale carried Lomov back to the days of his boyhood. He crawled and saw himself on the Green Island, amongst the blue stretches of low willows, where the nightingales were holding conversation with the rippling water on the sandy bank. The Volga flowed past, like mother-of-pearl in the moonlight, and out in the main stream a red buoy bobbed up and down; and like the sleeping kingdom of Dodon, all turrets and bowers, came a big, fussy Volga barge—and on the sand sat little Kirill Izvekov, his arms round his knees, thinking of what he was going to be when he grew up. What would he be when he had to forget that he was Kirill Izvekov? What would he be when he called himself Lomov? What would he be now, this very minute, when the Green Island of his boyhood days was far beyond his reach, when he was the wet, tired soldier Lomov, all hunched up on the ground, dragging after him a rifle and a pair of wire cutters, breathing in the overpowering, damp air smelling of bird-cherry blossoms that were already wilting, when he could see the black fringe of alders along the stream drawing with slow inevitableness closer and closer?

The sergeant stood up when they reached the bushes and Lomov stood up with him. They took a short rest, straightened their backs, unslung their rifles and went on into the undergrowth. Their eyes had become so accustomed to the darkness that they were able to distinguish the indistinct patches that were tree trunks and the patches of foliage that crowned them. The gully was not very deep. Feeling the ground with their feet, they moved down step by step towards the stream. The lazy murmur of the water was clearly audible. The nightingale trilled out its notes above their heads. Soon the black surface of the water showed here and there amongst the leaves. A minute later and they had a full view of the stream. Close to the bank they leaned against the trunks of trees that were probably willows.

At that moment a number of scattered shots rang out in the distance, followed by the rattle of a machine gun. Lomov looked at the sergeant. He stood motionless.

When the firing had died down he whispered to Lomov to wait. The firing began again, just as far away but in the opposite direction, to be followed by another silence.

It was then that Lomov noticed in front of him two shadows making for the river; immediately there came two thuds on the earth and a rasping crunch in the gravel of the bank. Two men had jumped across the stream, had straightened up and were standing still, listening. Their shadows were clearly reflected on the black surface of the water. Two ideas came into Lomov's mind simultaneously and somehow mingled together: that they were enemy scouts, and that they were Russians. The enemy could be setting out on reconnaissance and the Russians could be returning or could have lost their way in the undergrowth. By the newly acquired vision of a nocturnal bird he distinguished the helmets that these two men wore and realized that they were Germans; his thoughts were disturbed by an inhuman voice—it was the sergeant giving him an order.

The sergeant did not so much order as scream in an awful voice:

"Hit 'em with your butt!" and leaped away from his willow at the shadow nearest to him.

Lomov's hands turned clammy and his spine seemed to break away from his body. In order to get a good grip of his rifle he had to throw down the wire cutters. Without thinking, instead of opening his hand and allowing the cutters to fall to the ground, he gathered all his strength and hurled the cutters at the shadow, which had already had time to crouch down after the sudden scream. The blow fell on something soft and Lomov saw the shadow merge with the earth. Still without thinking of anything at all he took his rifle in both hands and saw that the other shadow was bending over the sergeant who had been knocked off his feet and had raised a hand over him. Lomov leaped and on the run drove his bayonet under the raised hand. He remembered only one sensation; with what effort he had withdrawn the bayonet stuck fast in the body. Then he heard the groaning voice of the sergeant:

"Tie yours up!"

Lomov ran back. The German was lying on the ground. Lomov fell on him with his knees in his back, pulled the man's arms behind him, took off his own belt and bound them tightly.

"Is he alive?" asked sergeant.

"Grunting."

"Stop up his trap!"

Lomov turned the head that the helmet held pressed hard into the gravel, felt for the mouth and stuffed into it more than a half of his screwed-up forage cap. Then he stood up and wiped his face on his wet sleeve.

Nothing had changed. The nightingale had not stopped his singing. The water still gurgled undismayed.

Lomov came to himself and realized that he had killed the other German outright with his bayonet thrust. He went over to the sergeant who was badly hurt by a blow in the shoulder from a rifle butt. Lomov wanted to help him but the sergeant objected. They divided the remaining task between them: the sergeant took the German rifles and Lomov had to drag the wounded German along. They arrived at their own trenches completely exhausted.

It was beginning to get light when Dibich interviewed Lomov. The sergeant could not report; he had been taken away to have his shoulder dressed. Still wet and shivering in the chill of the morning, Lomov seemed small and fragile even in the low-ceilinged dugout and it was strange to listen to his calm and, despite its brevity, concise account and to look into his eyes whose yellowness, lit up by the lamp, seemed to be laughingly lighting up and going out again.

"Very well," said Dibich, "you've been doubly successful; you've taken a prisoner and interfered with German scouts. I congratulate you. A good start."

Lomov was silent.

"Don't you know how to answer?"

"Glad to have been of service, Sir," said Lomov, frowning very slightly.

"It is an honour for the sixth company."

"Ours is a good company. If it wouldn't have been me, then one of the others would have done it. . . ."

"Very praiseworthy. But . . . tell me, please, what about the war, eh? You tell the soldiers not to fight but you seem to like it yourself? What am I to think?"

Lomov shifted his weight from one foot to the other. And did not take his unwinking eyes off Dibich.

"Will you permit me to explain?"

"Yes; go on. I want to know what you say to the soldiers in the company."

"I believe that war is one thing but a soldier's loyalty is quite another. Everybody has his own opinion concerning the war. That's a matter of views. But only a coward would not go to the aid of a soldier comrade at the front. There is no denying that, there's no contradiction."

Lomov made this little speech still more calmly than he had reported on the capture of the prisoner and for this reason his words seemed even more concise, almost dry as dust, and indisputable. At the same time Dibich could see that it was not easy for Lomov to remain calm and he thought that Lomov was not shivering from cold but from the effort to suppress his excitement. He shuddered as though his body was tormented by spasms, but after each of these spasms the tranquillity of his little body seemed greater; it was so infectious that Dibich also shivered.

He stood up and suddenly addressed the soldier as "you" instead of the customary "thou."

"Look here. I am not concerned with your views. But you must keep them to yourself. There is a war on and you have no right to hinder it. In any case you will not be allowed to interfere."

He stopped. Lomov waited in silence.

"And you stop preaching against cowardice in the individual in favour of the general cowardice of the whole army, of all Russia. If you want everybody to be against the war that means you want everybody to be a coward."

Lomov still did not answer. His silence was icy disagreement and Dibich had difficulty in preventing himself from raising his voice.

"Don't forget that you are a soldier!"

"Yes, sir," answered Lomov smartly in a soldierly way but somehow it was not quite serious and was accompanied by an intangibly sly and bashful smile.

"What do you mean by 'Yes, sir!' What do you mean by 'Yes, sir' when I'm talking to you as man to man? You don't agree with me? According to you all this is for nothing? We're spilling blood for nothing?

"Have I permission to speak?"

"Yes, yes, you may speak!"

"I believe that to admit an error is courage and not cowardice. And what is this war, if it is not an error?"

"Very good," said Dibich, controlling himself. "I am obliged to warn you as an officer and your commander. Stop your talks in the company on this subject. And remember that the court martial does not use the language I am using to you! You may go!"

Dibich did not remember this strange private from the sixth company any more nor the thoughts that he had aroused because from that moment on he had no time to remember anything but the matter in hand: before the sun rose the Germans launched their attack. During the first two days' fighting they cut the battalion off from the regiment, encircled the hill and continued alternate artillery bombardment and attacks until Dibich was wounded and taken prisoner. The sixth company fought to the end on the summit of the hill, defending the line that had been the reserve defences but had become the forward position. . . .

Now that he sat in Kirill Izvekov's office Dibich recalled the glance of the little soldier that had remained fixed in his memory—it still retained that same peculiar feature—Izvekov did not want to show the laughter in his eyes and knew that it was impossible to hide it, and it made him feel awkward when it constantly appeared.

"So this is where fate has brought you," said Dibich.

"What fate? This is what we were out for."

"For what—for this? For defeat?" muttered Dibich bitterly but uncertainly.

"For the defeat of the tsarist army in order to gain the victory of the army of workers and peasants."

Dibich noticed how Izvekov's smile suddenly disappeared, he turned away, hesitated, and then said, as though he wished to avoid the conversation offered:

"Your sixth company fought well."

"Yes," Izvekov shook his head, "they fought well but fruitlessly."

"Unfortunately the same may be said of the whole war."

"You think so?" asked Izvekov quickly and spread his elbows on the table. "That's not true. In that war the people found the road to their future. Do you think that it is fruitless?"

"But you yourself said that the company fought fruitlessly."

"Yes, we lost the battle. But a part of the company came out safe and sound,

you don't know that, you couldn't know, you had bad luck and the Germans captured you. Those who came out alive have now merged with the new army, which is fighting for the objective which could not have been gained by the old army and in that war, and which only became clear to the people in the course of the war: they are fighting for their emancipation."

"I understand," Dibich shrugged his shoulders very slightly. "The Lomovs lost the war but the Izvekovs won it."

Izvekov smiled but immediately covered the smile with the tips of his fingers as though to pinch it off and even jumped from his seat when he found the right words to say.

"Here we have it! I see that you consider that which happened during the war to be one thing and that which is happening now to be another. But that is absolutely incorrect! The people that were there are the same people that are here. Their lives have changed but their lives continue."

"But who are you, anyway, Lomov or Izvekov?" not making any effort to hide the irony but at the same time asking the question in sincerity.

"And is there any difference?" Izvekov was already smiling openly.

"It seems as if we were continuing the conversation that we began in my dugout three years ago. But it seems still more to me that we have changed places. Don't you think so?" said Dibich and seizing his wet blouse in his fingers he pulled it away from his body and shuddered. "I think I must be as wet now as you were then."

"I'm just as drenched myself," said Izvekov simply and felt his square shoulders. "Apparently we are both in the same position. No, I am serious. We have changed places, you say. But then you can occupy the same place as I do. Or my place even. That is, if you have the same convictions as I have."

"I am not in a state for any convictions at the moment," said Dibich.

He took out the note that Zubinsky had written and handed it across the table to Izvekov.

"You have relatives at Khvalynsk?" said Izvekov reading the note.

"My mother and sister. I haven't seen them for nearly five years."

"A long time. I didn't see my mother for nearly nine years but we met again, recently. I'm a local man," said Izvekov with direct confidence and a little thoughtfully. "I understand. I think I can help you. I will give you priority for a steamer. You will be able to go home."

He picked up his pen but then stopped and said, as though answering his own thoughts:

"Go and see your people and take a rest. But it's all the same whether you are in Khvalynsk or Saratov you will not be able to avoid the problems that you have not yet solved—have we changed places or not?"

"I have not been in Russia for three years," answered Dibich as though he were struggling to overcome some obstacle. "Everything is new to me. I do not recognize the people."

"You knew the army. The soldiers liked you. Look at the Red Army soldiers, that will explain a lot, will bring many things closer to you."

"You want everything at once. Convictions and the Red Army."

"At once?" laughed Izvekov. "Why at once? How long have you been in Russia? A month? These are different times from the old—sometimes an hour is worth more than a month. Revolution, Comrade Dibich. That is something to think about."

"I have nothing to think with!" said Dibich jerkily and dismally. "Understand? Nothing! I have no brain! I have eaten it, understand? Nothing but beets didn't satisfy me and I ate my brains to eke them out. For two years I added my brains to the German beets, understand? Like adding solid rations to the gravy. So as not to become an animal, so as to live, live I tell you, I nourished my organism, may the devil take it, nourished all my cells with my reserve of nerves. Look at them, these cells and this skin..."

He began to pinch his hand, pulling the wax-like skin far from the bony wrist. His eyes became clouded, his big forehead seemed to become bigger and rounder, it became a glazed yellow like bone marrow taken out of soup; the perspiration on it glistened.

"You don't feel well?" exclaimed Izvekov, rising quickly and running round the table.

But Dibich had already dropped his head onto his bony knees and with a strangely light grace slipped slowly out

of the chair and fell like a child onto the floor. Without any effort Izvekov picked him up and carried him to the sofa. He ran to the door, opened it carefully and said very softly to the short-haired young lady:

"Get a doctor. At once. Send him into my office."

When Kirill Izvekov first came back home he did not mention Liza. Far too much time had elapsed since they had parted. During the early months of his exile, thoughts of her had provided the wings that enabled him to soar far above the decrepit forest hamlet to which he had been banished but when he later learned that Liza had married, any thought of her was too great a burden for him to bear. This was his first encounter with the tremendous powers of human memory and the discovery of these powers astounded him. As long as he could regard his separation from Liza as something temporary, as long as he believed that he had only to serve his sentence before the life they had dreamed of together would begin, he visualized Liza living her life with him, always, day and night, although they were separated by the haze of numbing distance. But the moment she married she became merely part of his past, a part so strong it had the power to torment him; painful though it was, he tried to force himself to forget her but could not. He immediately stopped mentioning Liza in his letters to his mother, and Vera Nikandrovna realized that he knew what had happened and did not mention Liza either. All that Kirill knew, however, was that Liza had been given in marriage; he could not imagine who her husband was and, what is more, he did not want to know. Her one letter to him had arrived at the gloomy time of the snows; at a moment of a ruthless renunciation of the whole world, Liza told him of her marriage and begged him not to blame her, if only because her marriage was a burden of sorrow to her. She wrote that she had not married but had been given in marriage. Liza's infatuation for Tsvetukhin that had formerly worried him did not at first enter his head (Meshkov could not have given his daughter in marriage to an actor) but when it did eventually occur to him he felt something like malicious comfort at the idea that Liza's weakness had met with a punishment it deserved. As the years passed Kirill thought of her less frequently, but each memory of her came to him with more and more suddenness and in a way, senselessly, catching him unawares in a moment when he was not prepared to resist, in a defenceless moment of sorrow or contemplation. After his return from exile, when he changed his name he was even more exacting than ever with himself, learning to be cool and self-possessed in acting the part of the hard working, simple Lomov, a middle-class youth from Vassilsursk who valued his job as draughtsman in a factory, a part that gave reality to the passport he carried in that name. But in his evening walks over the high bank of the Volga, admiring the lights of the Nizhni-Novgorod fair grounds he would suddenly become conscious of an inexplicable desire to wander from street to street in search of someone, of a desire to find someone. For a long time he was unable to suppress the all-absorbing illusion that he was following and overtaking Liza. He not only heard her gliding footsteps, but in the half-light of evening he could feel her breath, that faint scarcely perceptible odour of fresh milk that had surprised him when he had brushed his burning cheek against hers. She was still close to him in his dreams; he was able to banish these dreams but the memories of her that came to him during his waking hours took him by surprise.

Vera Nikandrovna regarded Kirill both as the boy whose memory had remained untouched in her heart since the moment of his arrest, and as a grown man who sometimes seemed older than his mother. He had spent a third of his life away from her and this third was filled with an extraordinary content that could only be guessed by her from the letters that had become the main events in her life during the nine years' separation from her son. He had written to her during all the years of exile and at last had warned her that she should not worry if she did not get a letter for a long time—for a year or perhaps even longer—and then he had not written again until after the Revolution. She guessed this was necessary on account of what he called 'conspiracy', something so lofty and sacredly inexplicable that even a guess at what the word meant made her a

partner to this terrible secret of her son. She still remained the simple schoolmistress but year after year, when her thoughts went flying to her son carefully following his ways, when she eagerly snatched at every little scrap of news from him, when even his very silence told her about the changes that were taking place in him, she involuntarily thought of herself as of somebody completely different from all other human beings and not as a simple teacher.

Kirill appeared at last and all their insatiable, even if reticent, conversations followed the inevitable scheme: Vera Nikandrovna either listened to her son or answered his questions. To her it was a continuation of her correspondence with him; he knew what could and ought to be said and if he remained silent that meant that she must not ask. He did not say a word about Liza and this was something his mother could easily understand—a blanket of forgetfulness lay over the past and the warmth of memory could not penetrate it any more than the sun's rays could penetrate eternal ice.

And quite accidentally a wandering ray cast its light into the dark corner.

Shortly after the October Revolution, Vera Nikandrovna had abandoned her tiny flat in the wing of a house on the dusty town square and had moved into the school where the authorities had provided her with a proper apartment. Here there was more space than she was accustomed to—two large rooms with white walls and big windows, like classrooms, a huge kitchen and an entrance hall that alone would have held the entire flat she had left. The apartment reminded them of the old basement rooms in which the Izvekovs had lived for many years before Kirill's arrest; when he returned, these big schoolrooms with the trampling of children's feet and the shouts of the schoolchildren brought to his mother a feeling that this was a continuation of their former life—she was with her son again and back in the school. It seemed that all that was missing was the wrought-iron grills, with a design like a series of eights joined together, in front of the windows, and the three permanently rustling poplar trees. Vera Nikandrovna, however, found these big rooms a trifle empty at times and she longed for the tiny Dutch stove beside which she used to sit and which she fed pieces of birch bark that still had sheep's wool stuck to them; the stoves in the apartment were huge affairs that took the school furnaceman all his time to keep going.

Before Kirill had been home a week his mother realized that he would not live with her. He said just the opposite—that he did not want to be parted from her but in practice it was different; he needed an apartment in the centre of the city, close to the city offices, while the suburb of Soldatskaya Slobodka meant constant travelling. Vera Nikandrovna could not bring herself to abandon the suburb. She was not only tied to it by the school but also by the conviction, long since taken a firm root, that changing schools was bad from a pedagogical point of view: the pupil's family had to put faith in the teacher and if he ran about from place to place who could trust him? It would have been irksome for her to live in the centre of the city and Kirill found it impossible to live on the outskirts. They had to part. The son, however, decided that he would visit the suburb as often as possible and that his mother's house would be a sort of chief pied-à-terre and, in proof of this, began building up a library in one of the rooms.

For years he had dreamed of owning a library—long shelves with books, not the sort of shelves you could move from place to place, not shelves that stretched—yes, stretched is the word—along the wall; he wanted shelves built at right angles to the wall so that you could walk between them and stand—yes, stand—in the refracted rays of the sun and pull out a necessary or desired book from a tightly-packed row, open it at the title page or the table of contents in search of an unknown page or in astonishment at the fact that well-known lines still contained something unexpectedly new and impelling. In his precarious past Kirill had never owned more than a bundle of books, small enough to carry about in one hand, and all the time he dreamed of owning many, many books.

Now the time had come. Of course, Kirill did not think of settling in Soldatskaya Slobodka for ever or even for a long time. He believed, on the contrary, that he belonged to events and that events demand mobility of a man; he would be torn up from his place like a leaf from

amongst other leaves and carried away he knew not where. In his mother's rooms, however, there would always be that without which a man cannot live on this earth—shelter, a home, a refuge for the soul and this refuge, of which he would always dream, would be his library.

"I know what we'll do," he said to his mother one day, "for the time being we'll start a library with what we've got, with your books and mine—although mine are very few. It doesn't matter, there'll be about fifty to start with. But bookcases. . . ."

"You can take the bookcases from the teachers' room, they're not needed there and I'll buy a proper cupboard for it as soon as I get my estimate through."

Shortly before this Vera Nikandrovna had been appointed director of the school and she slipped very easily into this administrative job of which she was so proud. Even when the teachers discussed such things as the reorganization of the teaching system, she made more frequent use than was necessary of words like "estimate", "staff", "overexpenditure" and these words replaced the vocabulary to which she had been more accustomed—"program", "timetable", "hours".

Kirill did not like the bookcase from the teachers' room. It was so narrow and so badly stained with ink that he would not have considered it but for the fact that in that same room they found a pile of old used exercise books that had been consigned to the furnaceman, and the insides of the blue covers were still clean and bright. They decided to line the shelves with these blue covers and when they tried it the shelves did not look at all bad. Naturally the bookcase had to be placed along the wall: it would have looked awkward sticking out into the room, although Kirill at first measured it to see how it would fit when there were a lot of them—it fitted quite well across the room, too.

Vera Nikandrovna opened up the wire fastenings of text books with a table knife and carefully took off the covers; Kirill glued them on to the shelves, smoothing them round the edges of the boards with his horny fingers.

"I wanted to tell you, today I took a look at the apartment that has been found for me."

"Why didn't you mention it before? Where is it?"

"Very convenient. Not far from the Upper Market. In the Shubnikov house, d'you know it?"

Vera Nikandrovna almost cried out but she just gasped and Kirill, without turning round, asked:

"What's the matter?"

"Pricked myself," she said, "I pricked my finger on a wire."

"You should be more careful. You know what happens with nails and wires. . . ."

"And you look out for splinters," she said, quickly tucking a wisp of hair behind her ears.

"There was a case in our Regimental Committee," said Kirill. "We came to a village in Polessye. In one of the yards the soldiers saw a samovar and decided right away to make tea as they hadn't seen a samovar for such a long time. One lad began cutting wood spills and one of the spills went into his hand. Everybody laughed but two days later he was taken to the field hospital with blood poisoning—St. Anthony's fire. He'd been through the whole war, been in all sorts of engagements and then got into trouble over an old woman's job!"

"Did he die?"

"No. But they cut off his arm. Fine lad, he was. Member of the committee."

"So you see," said his mother.

"See what? You pricked your finger—I'm telling the story for your benefit."

"Is it a big apartment?" asked his mother after a short pause.

"A merchant's place. You could ride a bicycle round it."

"What do you want a place like that for?"

"If you would come and live with me. . . ."

"If only I could. . . ."

"I understand. I think I'll take two rooms—there are two with a separate entrance."

They did not look at one another, each of them was busy with his own simple little job. Kirill had become quite clever at pinning the paper under the shelves—the part that was folded over the top would be held in place by the books.

"I don't know that it will be very pleasant for you there," said Vera Nikandrovna.

"In the apartment? Why not? I don't need anything special."

"I know," she said softly and glanced

at her son, "but there is something special about that house."

"Ghosts?"

"Yes, perhaps," she answered, trying to laugh.

"If anything bad happened to the merchant, I could understand. There was nothing unusual there. He was evicted, the house was municipalized and that's all. I've heard that he's working for us, somewhere. Where could the ghosts come from?"

With a smile he turned to his mother and suddenly realized that she was not joking and that she was having great difficulty in controlling herself—he saw it in the movements of her dropping hands and the slow change of expression of her face as she drew her breath. She looked up at him and saw that he was waiting.

"Liza was married to Shubnikov." she said.

His swarthy face seemed to turn darker, it took on an olive-green hue; he did not stir.

"You didn't ask and so I didn't tell you anything," added Vera Nikandrovna, as though she were warding off his reproach.

He turned away, ran his heavy fist along a shelf, top and bottom,and spreading his hands out stood motionless and silent.

"I've used up all the paper. You're very slow," he said.

She handed him a few covers and he began to line the bottom shelf, bending right over and hiding his face. Suddenly he drew the air in through his teeth with a short whistle and stood up.

"Is it a splinter? Let me see!" Vera Nikandrovna walked over to him.

"It's nothing," he muttered biting the tip of his finger and kept shaking his hand so violently that his mother could not get near him.

He stopped working, went to the window and opened it. A tram bell sounded in the distance, the menacing growl of an engine grew higher and higher until it became an impatient hum and then broke off suddenly. The plaintive lowing of a cow answered the tram bell. The sunset had already tinted the timber houses until they looked like a painted picture. A herd of cattle came into sight. A cloud of dust, rose-tinted by the setting sun came 'round the corner along with the cows so they seemed to be carrying it along on their horns.

"You said 'she was,'" Kirill said to the window and getting no answer, spoke in a louder voice, "she *was* married to him, and now?"

"She left him during the war," answered Vera Nikandrovna.

Once again he stood silently looking out at the suburb—he saw the cottages change their care-free rosy hue for a deep red and then he saw that great glow, in which the fire still burned, tint everything with the golden shades of oncoming eventide. The cows, now lowing more contentedly and at the same time more pleadingly, went each to their own yard gates. Then silence fell.

"And what is she doing now?" asked Kirill, as though addressing the silence.

"I don't know. She went back to her father."

"Did she have any children?"

"I think she had one son."

"How old is he?" asked Kirill slowly; he suddenly turned sharply away from the window, walked over to his mother and quickly led her to a wooden settee, the sort you see in offices, and they sat down side by side.

"I see that you know all about it, don't you? How did it happen? How could it have happened? What was it? How do you understand it? Why, why, why?"

These questions that he showered on her so sharply seemed to have burst out of him as though untying all the knots within him. He threw off all the constraint that had checked his insatiable desire to know everything about Liza. His mother, as if pleased by his anxiousness began answering just as unrestrainedly; she told him all she and Liza had suffered on account of him, all that she had thought of Liza, that she had ever heard of her or had guessed at; she began to talk of these inspired details and to imbue them with extraordinary vividness such as only a woman can when she is talking about another woman, and then only when she intends to hide nothing.

Kirill sat with his elbows on his knees and his chin resting on his fists. He did not miss a single word of what his mother said. Of course, he knew Liza only as Liza. Apart from that, however, she was also a Meshkov. Formerly the Meshkovs had not existed for him, there had been only Liza. In those distant days he

had probably thought of himself only as Kirill. But he was also the son of Izvekov whom, it is true, he but faintly remembered, and the son of a schoolmistress who had brought him up to be that which he now was. The fact that Liza was a Meshkov seemed to explain what had happened but the explanation did not satisfy him. He still thought that Liza had acted against her own wishes and it was a mystery why she should have done so. He frowned, overwhelmed by the details that came in a flood from his mother. Their abundance became a burden; he wanted to make this first conversation about Liza the last, to bring it to its final conclusion.

"What do you think about her, anyway?" asked Kirill.

"I think she is too kind."

"Weak-willed?"

"No, kind. Kind to the one who is nearest to her at the moment. Kind in general, uselessly kind."

"Uselessly?" he asked, shrugging his shoulders in protest. "That's worse than being weak-willed. It means that she is indifferent. But I think you are mistaken. Perhaps she is—too soft-hearted?"

"Perhaps — soft-hearted," said Vera Nikandrovna, joining her son in his contemplation.

They heard a heavy tread on the stairs —probably the caretaker ascending with his slow steps: it was time to put on the samovar.

"At any rate she left her husband and took her child with her," said Vera Nikandrovna, "a weak-willed woman would not have done that."

"Women abandon their husbands from fear or from despair. Or because the husband disgusts them. It is not a sign of strength, rather of weakness. And, what is more, people change—how long did she live with her husband before she left him? This does not explain what happened to her before she was married."

Kirill stood up, stretched himself, as though he wanted to say that he would never again return to this subject.

"I hoped to get to the bottom of it," he said quietly. "But I have not and probably never shall. And it's no use anyway. Let's finish the bookcase."

The light turned a deep red, the way it does on the stage, and made the rooms seem richer, a world warmed up by the sunset that was disappearing beyond the horizon. The door leading to the entrance hall was wide open and there, too, was the deep red light.

The footsteps on the staircase ceased and a moment later a tall man, slightly stooped, appeared in the entrance hall.

He stood in the doorway and blinked, the light full in his round, moustached face.

"I was told that Comrade Izvekov lives here," he said in a tone of confirmation, carefully choosing his words.

Kirill went up to him, looked at him and immediately raised his outstretched arms as though about to lift something fragile though easy to handle.

"Pyotr Petrovich—you!" said Kirill softly.

The newcomer took Kirill by the hands, spun him round towards the light and nodded his head approvingly.

"A stout lad. And yet you still seem the same."

"And you're still the same," answered Kirill as softly as before.

"Am I?" said Pyotr Petrovich removing his cap and at the same time rubbing his hand over his head, "I'm losing my curls."

Throwing out their arms, they embraced and then stood back to examine one another, laughing more and more loudly all the while; together with their laughter they jerked out a whole series of short, incomprehensible ejaculations, as they moved slowly from the entrance hall into the room. They were quite different—Kirill was a head shorter, upright and even leaning slightly backwards, while his guest was tall and stooping, with long arms and neck. The dark red light, however, made them seem very much alike for a moment, merged them into unity and the resemblance was increased by their noisy merriment.

"Mamma, this is Ragozin!" shouted Kirill laughing, again taking him by the hand.

"So that's what you're like," she said in a scarcely audible voice.

She looked at Ragozin as though she were gazing down from a great height and in one instant she saw all her son's past and her own past and everything that until now she had not been permitted to see.

"Yes, yes, you know," muttered Ragozin as though apologizing, "that's

what he's like, he himself, you see what sort of things. . . ."

All three of them laughed like people who had long awaited a meeting and who had lost their power of articulate speech through excitement, but the incomprehensibility of the first words that came to them expressed that which at such a moment is inexpressible.

"See how it is!" repeated Ragozin winking slightly to Kirill, "so we meet again, eh?"

"You haven't changed in the least! You're just like real life!" said Izvekov walking round and round him and pulling at his sleeves and at the edges of his jacket that had rolled up through long service.

"And why shouldn't I be alive? Now's just the time to live!" answered Ragozin.

"And your curly moustache. Mamma! He used to wear a curly moustache in those days," recalled Kirill admiringly.

"And so he should," confirmed Ragozin unconcernedly twisting his moustache.

"Mamma! Get something extra special for us as quickly as you can!"

"Of course, of course!" responded Vera Nikandrovna, still eagerly studying their guest. "The samovar will be ready in a minute."

"That's good!" roared Ragozin. "Say what you will, there's nothing like a samovar!"

"Thanks. And a fine treat that is! Oh, mamma. . . ."

"And what else can I offer?" expostulated his mother in confusion.

These awkward outpourings were the first trepidations of joy that lasted until their emotions had subsided and their hearts settled down like a stretch of water whose surface sank into gleaming tranquillity after the ruffling of a passing wind. Ragozin examined the bookcase and picked up from the table cards on which the words "History" and "Sociology" were written in a firm round hand; he laughed slyly.

"Nicely written. And where's the library?"

"There'll be a library."

"A serious undertaking."

They looked at each other with glances that were now calmly studious.

"History will not be decided on the bookshelf any more," said Ragozin after a pause, "what d'you think?"

"Naturally. But it won't be decided without the bookshelf, either."

"Any more than it will without higher mathematics, eh?"

"That's true, too."

"Don't think—I'm not disagreeing," said Ragozin pacifyingly and laughed again. "You're very touchy, don't like people to razz you! I remember, you didn't like it as a kid."

"No, I don't mean anything," Kirill suddenly became shy and then added in a rather childish voice. "I got that during my exile. There I met a most unusual old fellow who had been exiled from St. Petersburg. He had a beard that came down below his navel."

"Populist, I suppose?"

"S. R.,[1] you think? Nothing of the sort. He said himself that he belonged to the Book Party. He was a librarian, a bibliographer and our people used to keep their pamphlets and papers behind the rows of books in his apartment until they could be sent out of St. Petersburg for distribution. It ended with his exile. If you only have heard him talk to us about books in the evenings—it was a joy to listen to him. Sometimes he would lecture to us and tears would roll down his beard. He would talk to us about the Elzevirs, about the Venetian Aldines and about our own Russian free press—the *Kolokol* (Bell) or the *Polestar*. One day when I was with him I called some little pamphlet a bookling. He began to tremble all over: 'D'you want me to despise you?' he said. 'Bookling, that is the despicable language of hypocrites and scoundrels. A book is life, honour, fame, wealth, a flight to the high places, an immeasurable joy! The mighty love of mankind?' 'And should I honour some reactionary rag with the name of book?' I asked him," continued Kirill, "He went pale: 'that,' he said, 'is filth, and filth cannot be bound together to make even a bookling,'" Kirill concluded.

"Curious," said Ragozin.

"He remembered every book that had been through his hands, even if only for a single day. He once admitted, to his own shame, that he was more loyal to books than to people. He told us enthusiastically about a Moscow book-

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[1] S. R. — Social-Revolutionary.

seller who every morning bowed his head and prayed for the soul of Nikolai, the servant of God — he meant Nikolai Novikov, the first Russian publisher, the first historian of Russian literature. 'I would agree,' said the bookseller, 'to abolish religion as I am an educated man. But it is impossible to abolish religion because an educated man has to pray for Novikov.'"

"I've also met such people," said Ragozin nodding his head vigorously. "I would like to abolish them as well but we must not, for who would there be to teach the love of books?"

"That's just it," Kirill put in, "and I believe you're serious. Aren't you? That bibliophile infected me with his fever. I don't pray to God but I make my bow to books."

"Don't set up idols for yourself," laughed Ragozin and suddenly added in business-like tones: "There's one place we must take a look at. Oceans of books. You know there's a Salvage Department? They have a whole warehouse full of ownerless libraries. We'll go over them. It's true I don't have much time to read but I've been looking for something in the way of books for a long time. . . ."

"You needn't apologize, I'm willing," said Kirill encouragingly.

They looked slyly at each other.

"Touchy," repeated Ragozin. "I suppose exile had some sense to it if you remember it with such enthusiasm. I was worried all the time: wasn't it on my account that they had sent a boy away into the wilds?"

"Although you're my godfather, you're not responsible for me. I went into it with my eyes open, didn't I? I had another worry on my mind: had I betrayed my comrades and you along with them? If I'd managed to get rid of all the leaflets in time, perhaps nothing would have happened."

"No, it was a well thought-out and extensive roundup planned by the secret police: they decided to rake in everybody at once, took them right and left. People were gathered into the net like minnows. It was only my luck that I managed to escape the net."

The lamp had already been lit and they sat down to table. In their reminiscences they easily slipped over to the past that had separated them, and then spoke of that which was closest to their hearts at the moment—the war; suddenly they were interrupted, somebody was standing in the half light at the doorway. Vera Nikandrovna, shading her eyes from the light of the lamp with her hand called out:

"Is that you? Come in."

There was a momentary pause for just a second, while Izvekov and Ragozin pondered over this interruption to their conversation that had really only just begun. The very next second their attention was involuntarily transferred to the girl who came into the room and both of them, as though by agreement, rose to their feet.

She kissed Vera Nikandrovna on the cheek and turned her own cheek to receive a kiss the way women do when they are close friends.

"It is Sunday today so I thought you would be at home," she said and, looking at the men, added, "I've only dropped in for half an hour."

She spoke softly but her voice had power like that of a singer with an innate fullness of sound.

"Of course, you haven't a moment to spare, have you?" Vera Nikandrovna chided her but not without a certain amount of approval or pride in the way a mother will address her children. "Kirill, this is Anochka Parabukina."

Anochka did not so much offer as thrust her light and rather long hand to Kirill as she moved towards him absolutely noiselessly.

"We have met before," she said still in her soft voice but even more sonorously than before, "although you can't possibly remember me. I was so high," she held her hand level with her chest. "I would have known you immediately."

She greeted Pyotr Petrovich, looked round the room and, not finding a chair to sit on, she went into the other room with a lightness that was almost strange, walking with a sort of gliding movement. Despite its noiselessness, however, there was something angular about her step and in general it did not seem that her lightness was due to grace but rather to her frail slenderness, especially noticeable in her thin arms and legs like the too long limbs of a girl who had outgrown her age. She brought a chair and sat down beside Vera Nikandrovna. The

lamp threw a bright light on her short cropped hair, on the ungirlish tuft at the back of her head, on the little womanish locks, gleamingly blond, on her forehead, and on her bare temples. Her face impressed one as being somewhat contradictory: its fine oval shape with the pretty mouth and chin did not seem to belong to the excessively stern brows that gave an expression of severity to her slow, blue eyes.

"What are you looking at?" Vera Nikandrovna asked Kirill who had remained standing and silently followed Anochka's movements. "She probably looks to you more like a boy than a girl, too? Stubborn aren't you?" (Vera Nikandrovna lightly stroked Anochka's hair.)

"What a long time has passed—a whole eternity," answered Kirill and moved his chair so that he could see Anochka, but at the same time he glanced casually at Ragozin and moved noisily back to his original place. He was determined to continue the former conversation and, overcoming an unexpected awkwardness, he said just that which is usually said under such circumstances.

"And then, you see. . . ."

His thoughts, however, were already on another track and although he turned towards Ragozin, his words were not addressed to him.

"As long as you look only at yourself, it seems as though nothing has happened: time passes swiftly full of ordinary things. But when you look at other people—it seems as though you have come back from another world—you wonder what has happened to you when everything else has changed so completely!"

"Today I am what you were when I first saw you," said Anochka, she stammered and then rapidly corrected herself. "No, no, only as far as age is concerned. I'm only talking about age!"

She almost burst out laughing and bit her lip; her eyebrows immediately took an upward leap and her eyes not only lost their stern look but became surprisingly mischievous. Everybody laughed and Vera Nikandrovna, as though setting a problem in school, began:

"If a girl was half as old as a boy nine years ago, and he is now one and a half times as old as she, how old is the girl?"

"I don't know about the girl, but as far as I remember the boy must be about twenty-seven," said Ragozin, wrinkling his forehead.

"You're good at arithmetic," said Kirill. "You should be in the Department of Finance."

"They tried to put me on that job but I managed to escape."

"You won't escape next time!"

"Ugh, getting touchy."

To Kirill alone this joke contained something that was not a joke at all. He continued looking at Anochka, bending over to see her behind the samovar that was between them, and all the time the word "eternity" that he had let slip was turning over and over in his mind. When he saw Ragozin he did not notice anything new in the difference that there had always been between them: they continued to advance in the same rank. Anochka's arrival showed him the changes in himself that seemed to have taken place instantaneously: he could certainly see the eternity that divided him from that fair-haired little girl whom he only faintly remembered, but the difference between them appeared as a completely new one. It was strange that although Anochka opened his eyes to the changes that had taken place in him and although she appeared to him as an entirely different person, she at the same time reminded him of something changeless. She did not in any way resemble Liza but it was Liza that Kirill saw in her, and he thought it strange that this Liza had not changed at all; she had remained the same pretty, eighteen-year-old girl, perhaps a little prettier than before, while he had changed completely, and they stood in ranks far removed from each other. And because Kirill was not accustomed to this sensation of duality, it brought him both unpleasantness and satisfaction.

"Where are you in such a hurry to go?" asked Vera Nikandrovna.

"Egor Pavlovich promised to rehearse with us this evening."

"Who's that?" asked Kirill.

"He's the instructor in our circle. Tsvetukhin, the actor."

"Tsvetukhin? Is he still alive?"

"And why not? He's not very old," said Anochka banteringly and almost offended.

"I meant, is he still here?" Kirill hastily corrected himself.

Of course, Tsvetukhin's name had to

be brought up once Liza's had been recalled—that was inevitable.

"I did not tell you—Anochka is going to act on the stage of the new theatre," said Vera Nikandrovna with that elusive note of either pride or apology that one uses in speaking of budding artists or actors. "She has already chosen her profession."

"D'you mean by that that others have not made their choice?" asked Kirill with a smile.

"That shouldn't annoy you," answered his mother straight out. "You said that you would begin to study as soon as possible in order to have a profession of your own. You have to be somebody. You can't live without a profession."

"Oho," exclaimed Kirill, laughing now and seized hold of Ragozin to elicit his sympathy. "We politicians study all our lives and never get to the end of our studies, do we, Pyotr Petrovich? You have to be 'somebody', and politicians aren't 'somebodies'! To build a new society, to create a world, to remake life—what sort of a profession is that? Writing verses, shall we say, is quite a different matter. That's a profession. Although if it comes to that what does a poet do? What is his occupation?"

"He produces things," said Ragozin.

"What things? You can't plough the land with sonnets or eat your dinner off odes instead of plates. But you call that a profession!"

"You don't like art at all, do you?" asked Anochka sternly.

"On the contrary, I love art," said Kirill and then paused. "But," he continued, "I love art in earnest. Moreover, I should like to include myself amongst the people of the art world, I should like to be an artist because I want to influence people. Don't you think that influencing people is a great art? At the moment I am only learning the craft of leading people. I know, however, that a craft can be raised to the great heights of an art. When I have all the tools in my hands, when I have at my disposal all the means of influencing people, the craftsman that I am will become an artist. If I learn how to build up a new society, I shall know all the joys of the artist to the same extent as an actor who can bring his audience to tears. I shall know the joy of the artist when some aspect of the hard life of the people disappears, and the happy, healthy and strong order of things that I wish to establish begins to enter into social relations and into the lives of the people... No! I love art," said Kirill again with deep conviction and gripping Ragozin still more firmly he smiled at his mother. "You and I will be somebodies, Pyotr Petrovich, we certainly shall!"

"Is he right?" asked Vera Nikandrovna turning to Ragozin, not because she needed confirmation of the truth of what her son had said but because she wanted to give expression to the conviction that she felt. Ragozin nodded, "He's right," and took Kirill's hand from his shoulder and squeezed it.

"So you don't believe that I shall also love art earnestly?" asked Anochka, still speaking sternly.

"Surely I did not deny it?" he said in alarm. "I did not want you to think that I have a grudge against art, that's all."

"You gave me every reason to think so, the way you spoke about poetry. . . ."

"Did I say anything bad about poetry?

"Not bad," Anochka shook her head and searched for a word. "Not bad but arrogant."

"Arrogant? Not that. That's a quality, possessed by the poets themselves. They think that writing verses is something far more important than making a revolution. Perhaps you think the same?"

Anochka did not answer but leaned towards Vera Nikandrovna and muttered mischievously:

"That's another 'poor' for 'Happiness of Mankind.'"

"Happiness of Mankind?" said Kirill.

"That's their school slang," explained Vera Nikandrovna, smiling. "'Happiness of Mankind' was their name for. . . What did they call the subject, Anochka?"

"I've just graduated the gymnasium—they call it a middle school now, of course—and we had special names for all the subjects. By 'we' I mean the girls, of course. Literature, for example, we called 'Fond Dreams.' The last year at school they introduced political economy and the constitution. We christened that subject 'Happiness of Mankind.' And I got a 'poor' for 'Happiness of Mankind.'"

"So you see, happiness of mankind does not come easily," laughed Ragozin.

"But we were talking about 'Fond

Dreams,'" said Kirill excitedly and looked at Anochka without a smile.

"Yes, I suppose we were," she said. She, too, looked him full in the face. "But it seems to me that you think much more of 'Happiness of Mankind' than you do of 'Fond Dreams.' And because you want everybody else to think the same as you do, you started our acquaintance by giving me a 'poor' grade."

"Now you've reduced it all to an abracadabra," said Vera Nikandrovna.

Kirill raised his fingers to hide a fleeting smile.

"I don't want everybody to think like me, I want you to think in the same way as I do."

"Not a very great demand. . . But I doubt whether I can meet it."

"Why not, if it's so small?"

"The differences between us seem to have cropped up too soon."

"For instance?"

"For instance, you changed the moment I mentioned Tsvetukhin's name."

"I don't know what he's like now," Kirill turned his eyes away, "in the old days I couldn't stand him. He's in love with himself, like a proud peacock."

"What is your name? Kirill? And your patronymic?" asked Anochka, suddenly.

"What do you call me behind my back?

"Behind your back? I don't call you anything."

"Oh, you, always touchy," smiled Vera Nikandrovna. "Nikolaevich, his patronymic is, Nikolaevich."

"Kirill Nikolaevich. Let me give you a piece of advice: never talk about people you do not know."

"That's true," said Vera Nikandrovna uneasily. "Tsvetukhin is a brave and simple man."

Anochka leaned lightly towards Vera Nikandrovna and again kissed her with remarkable swiftness.

"I have to go," she said and, holding Vera Nikandrovna's head between her hands and nodding her own head to keep time with the words: "That's it—a brave and simple man."

Vera Nikandrovna clasped her hands.

"How is Olga Ivanovna?" she asked, her eyes swiftly meeting Anochka's.

"Mamma is not well," answered Anochka as though in passing but in a way that indicated that there was nothing more to say; she stood up and walked round the table to say goodbye to Kirill.

"All right. I accept your advice. Don't be angry with me," he said suddenly and awkwardly.

"I'm not angry," she answered lightly and disappeared from the room in a flash.

For a minute they all sat in silence and then Ragozin sighed and asked:

"I hear you have an apartment. Are you going to move?"

"No, I don't like the place."

"Huh, what a fellow! They find you a real bourgeois palace and you're still not satisfied."

"Yes," said Kirill obviously thinking of something else, "I've become very stuck up, brother. . . ."

10

On that almost windless summer day Pastukhov emerged from the porch of Dorogomilov's house, wearing a light coat of an old cut—straw-coloured, with gleaming white thread and reaching to his knees—and looked up at the sky—isn't it getting dull? and then to the right and left—which would be the pleasanter way to walk? and then at his feet—isn't it too muddy? As he glanced down he noticed three little boys of about the same age, sitting on the pavement with their backs to the sun-warmed wall of the house and their legs thrust out V-fashioned in front of them. The asphalt of the sidewalk was covered with spittle. They turned their heads towards Pastukhov, wondering whether he would say something or whether he would pass by in silence. One of those rather grimy faces belonged to Alyosha. He walked over to him.

"What are you doing?"

"Playing," said Alyosha.

"What at?"

"Who can spit the farthest."

"Hmm," muttered Pastukhov, with a lack of determination and then added in an icy voice, scarcely moving his unsmiling lips: "Go into the house immediately and tell mamma I called you a dumbbell and said that you are not to be allowed out in the street again."

He allowed his glance to rest on the spitters. Where had they come from? This house seemed to have an irresistible magnetic force for small boys; they hung around it like wasps round grapes. It was senseless to try and keep Alyosha away from them: if they let him go out into

the street he would meet some of them, in the garden others awaited him, on the back stairs, he would meet a third set and still a fourth in Arseni Romanych's rooms. Perhaps there was nothing bad in his meeting these boys (Alexander Vladimirovich believed that children should grow up like ears of corn in a field amongst others of their own kind and not like cinerarias, each in its own pot), but there were too many boys. Olga Adamovna protested when she was sent to town shopping and Alyosha was left behind with nobody to look after him. She even tried to whisper that it was not her job to run round the markets. Pastukhov, however, really could not allow madame to sit at home while Asya went marketing. The times were such that she had to make the best of it. It was a matter of time — that is, these inconveniences occurred now and again; once the fratricidal squabble was over, Alexander Vladimirovich would return to his Karelian birchwood study in St. Petersburg. In the meantime they had to be patient.

After all, Pastukhov had more to put up with than the others. He was accustomed to work, to work in order that theatres produce his plays. In the present theatre they merely talked about work but did not do any, because Pastukhov's works were no longer being played. In the theatres they were talking of repertoire of classics, of Sophocles and Aristophanes, of the drama of high passions, of Shakespeare and Schiller, of popular spectacles on city squares, of mass acts, of a theatregoer who was himself a creative artist and who acted together with the actors on the stage. The theatres, however, did not talk about Pastukhov, about his well-known dramas and his really amusing comedies. There had been a time when not only the Korsh and Nezlobin theatres had produced his plays but when they had even risen as high as the Alexandrine Theatre in St. Petersburg. It sometimes happened that actors of his acquaintance who met him in the street would embrace him and ask in a stage sonorous bass voice—how are you, how is life?—would then begin to convince him earnestly that only he was the one capable of writing the plays that were now required for the stage—elevated, magnificent, on a grand scale (tremendous, you know, tremendous, they would say) because there was nobody left but Pastukhov who could rise to the occasion (they're all too shallow, understand? well, who, who? nobody, nobody!). But once the excitement was over, their pathos turned to a confident lyrical cooing from which it became obvious that even if Pastukhov did write his elevated plays nobody would produce them because this was the epoch of a search for the new and, probably, of the disintegration of the old, when everybody was seeking and nobody knew what he was seeking, when everybody rejected the old familiar forms, and Pastukhov's chief advantage was that he had a character of his own, his own style (—Pastukhov—that's definite genre, you understand? — they simply won't understand you, won't understand, that's all—yes, and who is to judge, who?).

So it seemed that it was no use writing. And Pastukhov himself could see that it was impossible to write. The earth's crust had been displaced—that was how he conceived the events. He who had formerly composed scene after scene with a comforting feeling of pleasure now heard the work of his own imagination in the same way as one listens to the squeak of an ungreased cartwheel coming through an open window. He had formerly worked as unconsciously as he had digested his food. But now work had become a torment to him because he did not know what he ought to do. The earth's crust had shifted—could such a tiny speck as his work find its place? Everything was tottering from the shock of the earthquake, and the stones that tumbled down from the cornices of century-old buildings buried people under their mass. The people, holding their hands on high to protect their heads as in biblical times, ran wherever horror drove them or accident thrust them. Pastukhov had also run.

He did not look at all like a refugee. He had not given up his habit of dressing well. True, he had not bought anything new for a couple of years but the fact that clothes are slightly worn seems to give life to them, especially on those who know how to wear them. He had such an air of elegance that an experienced eye knew him immediately for a Petersburgian. His habit of studying life in all its manifestations added to his independent mien, gave him a certain arrogance which he carried so well that it

was not often noticeable. He trod the earth as one who was both an enquirer and a judge, at times a simple-souled onlooker, at others so puffed up with his own importance that he looked like an ambassador of an insignificant country. At the same time, he was easily polite and possessed a nature that was full of the joy of life. Now that he was distrait, burdened with a lack of knowledge of the future he still retained the outward appearance of a man satisfied with his environment.

As soon as he arrived in Saratov he set about finding the actor Tsvetukhin, a friend he had made during his last visit to his hometown, and who was later not so much forgotten as transferred from the category of active friends to the category of friends by reminiscence, on account of Pastukhov's St. Petersburg busy life. Schoolfriends are brought together by the school and then parted by life—in the same way Pastukhov and Tsvetukhin were brought together some ten years before through their having lived in the same town, and they were afterwards parted by distance and by that delicate, imaginary difference in rank that makes itself felt between the inhabitants of the capital and those who are inveterate provincials.

Tsvetukhin was as much to blame as Pastukhov for the fact that over such a lengthy period they had not communicated. He was no lover of letter writing and rarely made an exception even for the sake of women and considered correspondence with men nothing more than a fad: am I a clerk that I should carry on a correspondence? he would say, and was convinced that actors could not write letters for any other reason than to borrow money. Perhaps he was also a little hurt at Pastukhov's silence and believed that he might not answer through sheer negligence if he were the first to write, and did not wish to submit his pride to such a test.

Pastukhov started out with a visit to the town theatre—there was no better place to get information concerning an actor well known in the town. He found out very little: Egor Pavlovich had not been working at the theatre for some time but had founded a special troupe and was busy with them either on the railway or at the garrison club or perhaps somewhere else.

"He's just crazy, you know," an old man with an unshaven chin said to Pastukhov, winking and raising his finger to his forehead.

"What d'you mean, crazy? Egor Pavlovich?"

"Yes, Egor Pavlovich himself. He left us and now there is something on his mind."

"Are you an actor, too?"

"No, I'm no actor. I'm a property man. But you can believe me."

Pastukhov was not disposed to doubt his word. He knew his friend for a man with strange whims and he remembered his love for the violin, his weakness for invention, his search for popular types to depict on the stage. It was the business with the popular types that he could never forget, for it had involved Tsvetukhin in some very unpleasant gendarmerie investigation of a dangerous revolutionary affair in which they were almost embroiled together. With equal certainty he expected from Tsvetukhin both the very ordinary actions of quite nice people and the extraordinary things that great eccentrics do.

Alexander Vladimirovich left the Limes and walked towards that old, squat hotel near the conservatory where Tsvetukhin had once roomed. He recognized the courtyard, although the poplars along the pitted asphalt paths had sprung up much taller and thicker. Just as in the old days odd strains of music came out of the open windows and melted in the air—a piano arpeggio, the spitting noises of a flute, the internal rumblings of a 'cello. The tall red building with a roof like a row of sugar loaves, seemed to be standing on tiptoe to reach the heavens and offering up a musical mixture of voices. The hotel buildings lay at its feet. Pastukhov walked round the building farthest away. Here, too, the windows were open and the low building responded to the taller with the high notes of a piano out of tune.

There was nobody about, and without any interference Pastukhov was able to examine the long corridor that smelt of mushrooms and ammonia, the open rooms in which stood rows of beds, close against each other, covered with brown blankets and at last reached a little hall in which stood a matted artificial palm. Standing in the doorway he listened to the persistent imitation of real music.

A young lady in a very short and narrow skirt, pressing on the right pedal with a fashionable cloth boot, laced to the knee, was hammering the *Maiden's Prayer* out of a piano—the tune that for all time will remain a memorial to the dreaminess of the provinces of olden days. The musician held her forefinger perfectly stiff at right angles to the obedient keyboard.

Pastukhov coughed. The young lady stopped suddenly with her finger pressing a key. The sound of the piano slowly died away.

"Did you want me?" asked the young lady.

"Excuse me if I have disturbed you from your exercises."

"What?"

"I interrupted you. Can you tell me if the actor Tsvetukhin lives here?"

"Actor?" said the girl rapidly pulling her foot away from the pedal so that the instrument whined like an old dog that has been kicked. "What is he, a delegate?"

"I don't know," said Pastukhov, "but it's possible, of course."

"They're mostly delegates here."

"What delegates? Perhaps Tsvetukhin really is amongst them."

"Why shouldn't he be?" agreed the young lady crossing her legs. "Those who come for all sorts of congresses stay here. This is a hostel. There are conservatory students in the last two rooms. Only there are no actors amongst them."

"I beg your pardon, but you are no doubt also a student at the conservatory?" Pastukhov's interest was so respectful that nobody would have noticed the irony.

"Do you think so because of my playing? No, I'm just an amateur. And have you been told that this actor lives in the hostel?"

"He used to live here in one of the rooms."

"A long time ago?"

"Quite a while ago," said Pastukhov seriously, "It must have been eight or nine years ago."

The girl bent down and seized her laced shin between her interlocked hands, opening wide her merry mouth of pearly white teeth.

"What? Nine years? But that was in the last century!" she stammered between roars of laughter. "Surely, you're joking! If it's true that it was so long ago, you had better ask my grandfather about your actor. I suppose you are an artist yourself, too?"

Her eyes, full of curiosity and admiration, moved from his hat to his costume and then his shoes, scarcely pausing at his face. She spoke vivaciously and with great interest.

"Do you work here?" asked Pastukhov with a smile.

"No, I'm in the *Mirror of Life*."

"Oh, you're in the mirror of life, are you? And what's that?"

"Just down the street, the cinema. Don't you know it? I'm an usherette there. And Aunt Masha lets me come in here to play the piano."

"Aunt Masha?"

"Yes, she's a chambermaid here. There's a piano in the cinema but the administrator won't let us play it. I live near here with Aunt Masha and we're good friends. She's gone to dinner now and asked me to stay here a bit."

"Extraordinarily interesting," said Pastukhov, "thank you."

"Tell me the truth, you are an actor, aren't you?" she asked him again and, releasing her hands, pushed back the cheeky locks that had fallen on to her forehead.

"I shan't tell you."

"But I knew it at once: actors are always so cute. If you're not joking and your comrade really did live here so long ago, you'd better go to the first block, there's the superintendant there, he may know where to find him."

Pastukhov thanked her again and got some satisfaction from her keen glance in which unconcealable feminine hunger made itself felt, he smiled, while she laughed aloud in reply as he left. In the courtyard he again heard the obstinate notes of the piano, saw that finger pressed perpendicularly on the keys, and smiled.

In that droll amateur of music he saw, however, something newly born and so promising that it was not the girl who seemed like a curiosity but he himself with his search of a past century. The last century!—those words stunned him when they were applied to quite recent times that he had been accustomed to think of as going but which had already gone beyond recall. Did not he himself belong to the last century? A remnant, a splinter, a fragment of

the shattered cornice of a tottering edifice? A strain from a chorus long since sung that had remained stagnant in the air, some pitiful note from a provincial *Maiden's Prayer*?

"What nonsense!"

He had scarcely banished those ideas as nonsense, when the time which he had considered to be but yesterday moved off to such an unattainable distance that he stood still in fright. His surroundings seemed to him to have changed decisively and were unlike what they had formerly been, in the same way as the plan of a city is unlike the city itself. The plan was the same as it formerly was, the houses stood in their places, they were the same height and even had the same colouring but there was a new expression to it all, a new meaning. In this environment that had changed beyond all recognition, he saw himself as the only one who remained unchanged. He wandered idly about the unknown town, looking for his past, looking for the age to which he belonged.

"I'm old," he said to himself, walking slowly out into the street and gazing at it in fear. "I am the only person of my age here."

He had to find the negation of this unasked for self-admission of old age, in order to re-establish his beatific spiritual equilibrium, and suddenly his eyes picked out from amongst the passers-by an extraordinary looking man who was approaching him.

He was an old man with a colourless bald head framed in a crescent of bluish-white hair that had its points at his massive ears. His round beard and his grey eyebrows as big as a moustache made his face look as if it came from an icon, the face of a martyr or avenger. A crumpled tussore silk jacket hung from his shoulders; it was the sort of jacket that belonged to a once upon a time summer wardrobe, with pockets that dangled down around his knees, heavy from newspapers and bundles that had been pushed into them. In his hand he carried a Panama hat that had grown dark with age like a dried up pumpkin. As he approached Pastukhov, the old man's face wrinkled up, his cheeks dropped into folds, his smile exposed mutilated greenish yellow teeth that looked like a mouthful of pistachio shells.

"And when did you come back to the old hometown, Alexander Vladimirovich?" he sang out, throwing out his arms to embrace him. "Welcome! Don't you recognize me?"

"I beg your pardon, but I don't," said Pastukhov blinking at him.

"How can you! The young grow up, the aged get older. It was I that rescued you, dragged you out, when the gendarmerie were persecuting you in connection with the underground! Remember?"

"Yes, yes, yes—But please . . ." recalled Pastukhov and did not himself believe that he could recall anything of the kind.

"Well, well, well," said the old man helpfully.

"Yes, yes, there was something like that. . . ."

"Of course, of course, try to remember! It was the time when you had to sign a paper that you would not leave the town, remember?"

"Yes, yes. . . Now, really. . ." said the astonished Pastukhov.

"When you wanted to go to Astapovo, to attend the funeral of Lev Nikolayevich [1], remember?"

"It's a fact, but please, please. . . ."

"Now, now, come on!"

"But how then, eh? It's just that I can't. . . ."

"Ai, ai, ai, Alexander Vladimirovich! Who took so much trouble with applications to the prosecutor for you, eh? Who saved you for art and for all of us? Come on, come on!"

"Please, what is your name?" said the tormented Pastukhov.

"Mertsalov, Mertsalov, of course! Don't you remember?" complained the old man at last, convinced that his name would gladden anybody's ears.

"Oh, Mertsalov!" repeated Pastukhov, distrait.

"Yes, of course it's Mertsalov, the former editor of the former local paper *Listok*!"

"Oh, yes, yes, of course. Good morning, good morning!" Pastukhov exclaimed with relief and wiped his face with his hand.

They pressed and shook each other's hands and Mertsalov's pockets banged against his knees; he covered his bald head with the Panama and then bared

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[1] Leo Tolstoy.

it again. As Pastukhov looked at the old man, his own self-satisfaction came back to him with all its force—how good it is that I am young, young, that I do not wear tussore jackets, don't fill my pockets with newspapers, that I have sound teeth in my mouth—how good it all is.

"Wonderful," he said, taking the old man by the elbow and turning him round not in the direction in which he was going but in which he himself intended to go. "It's a good thing that I have met you. How are you getting along, eh?"

"I live as well as I can in these times—I labour and wait."

"Aren't they after you on account of your *Listok*?" asked Pastukhov en passant.

"Why should they? I'm not just some sort of an old reactionary, if you please! I've dreamed of the revolution ever since I was so high. Everybody knows that. In the darkest times I was connected with the underground. I rescued many people the way I did you."

"Yes?"

"What do you think? I knew that you, too, were working for the revolution?"

"Well?" said Pastukhov, smiling uncertainly.

"Of course, I knew! We understand each other! You risked your future and your fame, and I risked my head more than once. All sorts of things happened. I remember that I swore on oath that you were not implicated. And, of course, I knew, that you were really implicated!"

With a brief smile Mertsalov shook his head as though he were condescendingly approving himself for something that deserved condemnation. Pastukhov looked at him with penetrating curiosity.

"I did not know that you had helped me so much," he said rapidly. "I offer you my thanks, even if somewhat belated."

He stretched his hand out to the old man.

"What for? It was a sacred duty, a matter of honour. One has to do so much good that one does not remember it all! I had to say just a little word about Tsvetukhin as well. He was also not without sin, hee, hee."

"I'm glad you've remembered him. Where is he? I haven't been able to find him."

"Tsvetukhin? Why, of course, he's here. He's gathering talent from amongst the people. He dreams of organizing a mobile theatre. An interesting personality. He's quarreled bitterly with everybody. Temperament. Thinks of moving mountains."

"You don't say? How like him! But where can I find him?"

"Nothing easier. Of course, I'm hand in glove with all the theatre people. In the newspaper—you remember it?—they won't give me any prominent position, I'm what you might call a man of individual tastes although, of course, I have social interests. Still they respect me. I can't complain. I've been given the art chronicle, you see. And so I still write. A little. But we'll wait, we'll wait."

"But tell me how I can get in touch with Tsvetukhin," Pastukhov said to hurry the old man along (he had already noticed that Mertsalov was overfond of the words "of course" so dear to all chatterboxes, as though everything that concerned him, Mertsalov, was or should be known to every chance acquaintance).

"I'll find out where our Egor Pavlovich has pitched his tent and tell him about you. He'll come to see you. He'll be glad, glad. We honour our fellow townsmen. Where are you staying?"

"With an acquaintance, nearby. With a man named Dorogomilov. Have you heard of him?"

"Oh, my good God, you live with Dorogo. . . ."

The old man stopped short and held on to Pastukhov so that they stood face to face. He raised his sculptured brows so that his bald patch moved on to the bend of his forehead like molten wax; he immediately changed his expression of amazement to a kindly smile which, in its turn, astonished Alexander Vladimirovich who was already on his guard.

"I only made his acquaintance by accident. What sort of a fellow is he?"

"Who doesn't know him—he's an old inhabitant! Queer chap, lots of ups and downs."

"Mystic?" asked Pastukhov, without knowing why.

"I don't think so. More likely a dreamer, a lover of riddles, a Utopian."

"And a bookkeeper."

"Yes, just imagine it! From time immemorial he's been running the accounts of the municipality. He's what you might call an inhabitant of two worlds. An innocent mystifier. Not a mystic, as you think, but a mystifier!" Mertsalov was pleased with that word— "You can't tell me you never saw him before? Why he can't be missed, he's always got a crowd of boys around him."

"That's it, what does it all mean?"

"That's his eccentricity. He's a little god to all the children. It's a long story. Some of it is probably true and there are many legends that can be put together to make sense. . . ."

They were walking along the Limes and Pastukhov had no reason to be sorry that he accepted Mertsalov's suggestion to sit down and listen to the stories about Arseni Romanych. Mertsalov turned out to be something more than a mere chatterbox; he was an excellent storyteller.

The Dorogomilov story that was current in the town had its beginnings in the distant past when Arseni Romanych was still an undergraduate at Kazan University. One summer he went duck shooting in the Khvalynsk woodlands, met a party of sportsmen there who took him to Khvalynsk. They made merry in the quiet, dull little town, became firm friends and then set out to visit Baron Medem who lived on a nearby estate. Here what is known as a fatal meeting took place. The Medems had a ward, a pretty girl whose imagination had not been spoiled by any city nonsense. Dorogomilov lost his head in the way only a young man can on an August evening when he is free and living amidst fields, orchards and gardens. He met with a most tender response and went back home on wings. The Medems, however, had their own ideas about their ward, and they gave her in marriage to a poor relation, a Moscow grenadier. The misfortune shattered Dorogomilov. He left the university and was ill for a lengthy period. He was then living with his godfather, a Kama shipowner. Those were the years when the shipowners piled up wealth unheard of in the Volga basin. But some of the shipowners grew rich, others went bankrupt. Dorogomilov's benefactor was ruined and the student who had still not recovered from his nervous breakdown, went to live with poor relations in Saratov, in order to share their poverty. He did not make a success of anything he tried. He did not even consider marriage; he was one of those people who always keep an oath, and fate had driven him to vow never to marry. A couple of years later he heard a rumour that the grenadier had abandoned his wife and that she was dying of consumption. Dorogomilov went flying to Moscow in despair and sure enough found his beloved on her death bed. She had a child. Dorogomilov promised her that he would bring up the boy and took him away with him. He now had to think of the boy, as well as of himself and he took the first job that was offered—in the Municipality. The last thing he had thought of was the countinghouse but the boy needed looking after and he had to keep a nurse. Dorogomilov put so much into his work that in a short time he made himself indispensable to the Municipality. Although he devoted himself most praiseworthily to his work in order to consolidate his position, Arseni Romanych had his heart in the child and his affection for the boy grew with each passing day. He adopted him, made his education the purpose of his life, grew accustomed to believing himself fortunate, and the boy's happiness seemed to him to be forever assured. A different fate awaited both of them, however. One day they went out boating with a teacher named Izvekov, a friend of Arseni Romanych, and were caught by a sudden storm out in the main current of the Volga. They could not row either to the bank or to the shallows. The boat filled with water and capsized. Izvekov first swam for the boy but was unable to get a good grip on him from behind, and the boy grasped his rescuer round the neck in his fright and both of them went to the bottom. This misfortune occurred like every other, instantaneously, and right before Dorogomilov's eyes. He held on to the overturned boat and it carried him to a sandbank. Izvekov's body was thrown up onto an island a week later but no trace of the boy was ever found.

The catastrophe was not without its effect on Dorogomilov; he was sent to a mental home. He was treated with-

out any special science, as was usually the case in those days—in madhouses, that is—with soothing drops, baths and more often, with nothing at all. He was discharged in a state of dire melancholy. Suddenly, however, another interest seemed to take hold of him. The twelve-year-old boy had been a fine lad and he left behind him several friends of his own age, and they showed a sympathy for Arseni Romanych that was far from childish. They began to visit him, to spend whole days with him, and he slowly melted in the warmth of the love shown him by these boys. The first job he set himself was to detract the attention of his young friends from the Volga. He himself was afraid to go down to the bank and even stopped looking towards the sparkling and flaming waters of the river. There can be no more certain way of losing the friendship of children than interference with their urge to get to the water. Their walks with Arseni Romanych in the hills and woods, their visits to villages, to the excavations of the Tatar Uvek, to a tobacco factory, to a steel foundry at Chirikhin may all have been very interesting but the lads were always looking towards the Volga and Dorogomilov was faced with the choice: either lose the love of his young friends or overcome his hydrophobia. In the course of years he overcame it and was captivated by the boys' love of the river; then began steamboat excursions, trips to the camps of fishermen who moved back and forth from the shores to the islands where they saw schools of sterlet, carp and bream.

Very often they would go out in a party clustering around Arseni Romanych like chicks round a hen, and scamper down to the river bank with fishing rods to catch perch and roach that gleamed like blue enamel; they would light a fire and boil a chowder that nobody would eat but those who have been accustomed from childhood to sit dreamily beside the water with a fishing rod. With the advent of cold weather all these pleasures would come to an end; this was the time for the Dorogomilov library to emerge to the foreground. He collected books more for his young friends than for himself and by inculcating a love of reading in them he made them admirers of his bachelor habitat.

He was, of course, a born teacher but his associations with the children were based on personal friendship, a fact which seemed strange to many people who would throw curious glances in his direction, but they finally got used to him the way one does to a local idiot. Those boys who were unable to make friends with him, nicknamed him "Hairy" and openly ridiculed him, especially as he grew older and became excessively eccentric in his manners. He was the cause of fights amongst the boys—knightly tourneys—whenever one of them got more attention from him than the others. There were also scraps between those who defended his honour and those who insulted him. To Dorogomilov this whole world of romantic childish affections, dreams, friendships and quarrels, a world mirrored in the clear, bold eyes of the lads, in their burning fantasies, their unquenchable thirst for knowledge and the naive purity present only in wild animals that have not been hunted—this world was a drug to Dorogomilov, and as the time passed the old man became more and more of a drug fiend. The children grew up and scattered over the world, leaving their comrades as a legacy to Dorogomilov; they gave the newcomers special council, handed on the little traditions of the unwritten cult of respect for the old man. He rarely had more than four or five friends at a time, and his association with them did not remind them of school and the classroom—it was free and easy, as though they were grown-ups and although the boys went to Arseni Romanych to rest they often absorbed more from him than they did from the classroom.

Dorogomilov, of course, never forgot his unfortunate meeting on the Khvalynsk estate or his adopted son whom he never brought up. He never spoke to anybody about these memories, and he hardly ever answered questions concerning the death of his friend Izvekov. He seemed always to be absorbed in his duties, always on the run on some urgent business, and his threadbare frockcoat that flew open as he ran was well known in the town. Although people had become thoroughly accustomed to him, nobody would admit that he was quite ordinary, everybody found something inexplicable in his behaviour and in his features,

something which, incidentally, they find in everybody who has been an inmate of a madhouse.

"A wonderful story," said Pastukhov with a smile of satisfaction after he had heard the narrative. "And who was that Izvekov? There is something familiar about that name."

Mertsalov slyly swayed his whole body and even let out something like a miaow as he whistled a light motive down his nose.

"Hmm, yes, hm-m-m, Alexander Vladimirovich, I presume that is a name that will tell you very, very much (the wrinkles on his face became folds running in all directions). Of course, at one time you were mixed up in the same business as Izvekov, who was a mere boy then, remember?"

"Yes?" said Pastukhov, again indifferently.

"Your comrade-in-arms Izvekov was the son of the teacher who was drowned. And today he is neither more nor less than the secretary of the local Soviet. H-m-m-m."

"Is that so?" answered Pastukhov, as though he were thinking profoundly over Mertsalov's words, but then immediately turned the conversation into another channel. "You know, when my wife, Asya, first met Dorogomilov, she immediately felt that he was a righteous man. What do you think?"

"He is of the righteous family," laughed Mertsalov, "the pillars of the city, eh? Maybe, maybe. But today, you know, it is a question of whether the city is being held up at all. I wonder whether it will continue to hold up amidst these convulsions of the planet."

"Convulsions of the planet," repeated Pastukhov.

They looked at each other, smiled in silence and began saying their farewells, Pastukhov reminding Mertsalov that he had to find Tsvetukhin, and Mertsalov promising faithfully to do it.

Making his way home and reviewing in his mind those traits of Dorogomilov's character that he had learned from Mertsalov's story and also the behaviour and noteworthy features of the narrator himself, Pastukhov unexpectedly found the porch door wide open in front of him. There was nobody to be seen in the street, even the boys who usually played somewhere nearby had disappeared.

He ran upstairs. The door to the apartment was unlocked and wrangling voices interrupting each other came from the corridor.

"No, excuse me, no, excuse me," shrieked Dorogomilov; his voice was beseeching, rather than menacing.

Pastukhov went into his own room. Immediately he noticed Asya and by her look that came pitifully through tiny tears—tears that Alexander Vladimirovich knew very well and which did not come from chagrin or sorrow but in a moment of humble weakness—from these touching but scarcely noticeable tears he realized that the disturbance in the corridor not only concerned the shouting Dorogomilov but probably first and foremost his, Pastukhov's family. He stopped short and, instead of saying what he was thinking, said the first thing that fell from his lips:

"What's wrong with Alyosha?"

Asya shook her head, smiled with the flattered pride of a mother whose feelings have been touched by the father's anxiety for his child. She went to her husband. He kissed her soft fingers and then noticed Alyosha.

The boy was pressed close to the stove, his arms folded across his chest like a grown-up; he stood in anticipation, looking at his father with something like fright. Olga Adamovna sat in the doorway of the little room, holding the jamb like a rifle—she wore the expression of a sentry who has resolved to turn to stone rather than leave his post.

"I'm glad you've come," said Asya.

"What's happening?"

"We're being evicted," she answered simply and with a faint hilarity as though the fact that her husband was still clasping her hand was a pleasure that made up for all the unpleasantness.

"Only us?"

"Us and our patron and his chattels in other words—the whole crew is being chased off the ship!" she laughed and then added in a practical insistent tone: "You must do something about it. Arseni Romanych gets too excited and in my opinion will only do harm. A very nice young soldier is here and he is swaggering a little. Just take him down a peg or two. Listen to the fight."

Alexander Vladimirovich slowly left the room.

The old rubbish that was piled up to the ceiling could not even half drown the approaching shouts. It seemed as though several people were all shouting at once—so many different shades were included in that irreconcilable squabble. He heard threats and ridicule, admonition, venom and rudeness.

"I'm telling you for the tenth time that this has nothing to do with the Municipal authorities, the premises are being requisitioned by the military authorities. The military authorities!"

"Requisitioned,requisitioned!" whistled the flute-like tones of Dorogomilov's broken voice. "Nobody is allowed to requisition the property of the municipality without its consent and permission, see!"

"The military authorities take what they want. There's a war on and—as you are pleased to put it—see!"

"No, there's no 'see.' It's a poor favour you're doing the military authorities by making them commit illegal acts."

"I'm not doing favours, I'm doing my duty. And as far as illegality is concerned you needn't bother. There will be a legal order."

"The order comes from the municipality!"

"A legal order."

"Only an order from the municipality is legal."

"Don't you worry."

"I like that. I'm deprived of shelter and am told that I can eat my property and my books if I like—yes, that's just how you put it—and then I'm told not to worry! But understand me. . . ."

Pastukhov stood by the window lit up by the light of day and no matter how much he blinked and screwed up his eyes he could not see what sort of fellow was moving up and down the corridor, standing still and turning round and round in order to parry Arseni Romanych's shouts. Then two figures came floating out of the darkness into the light together. The first was a soldier in a magnificent tunic and, pushed right over his brows, was a cap with a long straight peak like a book cover and a jaunty little red star on the cap band. Walking in step with him, shoulder to shoulder, was a man who kept his lips tightly compressed, he was in a semi-military, semi-civilian clothes—army breeches, a striped jacket and peaked cap with white piping like the Volga pilots wear. Pastukhov obstructed their way and the soldier, softly clicking his heels, stopped to indicate that he wished to pass.

Just then Dorogomilov pushed himself forward, holding out his hands with a whimper of despair.

"Alexander Vladimirovich!"

He was in a waistcoat and an old shirt with round-cornered, starched cuffs that rustled harshly against his wrists, his hair was hanging down over his temples and mingling with his beard from under which hung an undone spotted tie.

"Alexander Vladimirovich! Excuse me, excuse me, please! But listen. This comrade comes here, looks over the apartment and announces that it will be occupied by the Military Commissariat! The military authorities have need of premises. Excellent, excellent! But you and your family? Your little Alyosha? And I and my library? And the Communal Department of the Soviet to whom this house belongs? All this does not interest the Citizen Soldier. He is interested in the war."

"I beg your pardon," said the man interested in war, interrupting him.

Placing his thumb into his sword belt, he closed his eyes for a second as though he were mustering his patience for an appeal to listen to the dictates of reason. Alexander Vladimirovich thought this a suitable moment to nod his head and announce his name with overpowering slowness, in a manner that he had long since evolved for use whenever he wished to create an impression. The soldier snapped his heels together and saluted, bringing his hand to his imposing cap peak in a style all his own: he clenched his fist and then when his hand reached the vicinity of his temple he flung out his fingers, leaving his hand cupped as though he intended to push back the curls that peeped out from under the cap band.

"Zubinsky, at the disposal of Town Military Commissar," he said in a voice quite different from that he had just employed in the slanging match, a voice that had a certain pleasantness to it. "Permit me to explain. The Military Commissar proposes to occupy the upper

storey of this house for one of his institutions. Citizen Dorogomilov has no need to get excited. . . ."

"No need!" Screamed Arseni Romanych, rattling his cuffs.

"Absolutely no need, because he, in accordance with the law, will be given a room, possibly downstairs in this house."

"A room! My humble thanks! And my library, my library?"

"With regard to the library, I personally presume that if it should be of value. . . ."

"Who will determine its value? You? You? You?" screamed Dorogomilov in a spasm of rage.

"Should it be of value," continued Zubinsky making a light play of his tranquillity, "it will have to be transferred to the public library, but should it be of little value. . . ."

"Little value! . ." Arseni Romanych was almost taunting him.

"In that case it may remain with its owner."

"But there is no place for the books, no premises!" announced the owner insistently.

"If no place can be found for the books, the Salvage Department of the Gubernia Economic Council will handle them."

Dorogomilov staggered to the wall and pronounced in an unexpectedly soft voice:

"D'you hear that, Alexander Vladimirovich?"

"Yes," responded Pastukhov, "you seem to have gone rather too far."

"I'm answering questions. I gave you my opinion, that's all."

"And what is your opinion concerning me and my family?"

"Citizen Dorogomilov requires an order from the municipality from us. Why did he allow you to occupy his rooms without any order, Citizen Pastukhov?"

Everybody was silent. Zubinsky was politely interested in the way Alexander Vladimirovich was discouraged, how Dorogomilov was stroking his hair, how the man with the tightly-compressed lips kept silent and, lastly, slowly allowed his eyes wander towards Anastasia Germanovna who was silently watching the scene from the door of her room.

"In other words, you will simply turn Citizen Pastukhov and his family out into the street, eh?" she asked suddenly. Her voice was soft and she was smiling—she could be both charming and challenging—so that Zubinsky was taken aback and answered her respectfully:

"With a name like yours you will hardly have to stay out in the open."

"That was said very gallantly," said Asya, still smiling, "but we should prefer the gallantries of a good room in a hotel, wouldn't we, Sasha?"

"I should prefer to be left alone," said Pastukhov gloomily.

Zubinsky shrugged his shoulders to indicate that he fully realized how unpleasant it all was but that he was a man in the service and was only doing his duty.

"I hope you will help Citizen Pastukhov," he said turning to his companion who, having remained silent all the time, regretfully opened his mouth to mutter a few words, as though he were fighting off a headache:

"Can arrange it."

"Excuse me, but who are you?" enquired Asya sympathetically.

"Representative of the Housing Department," said the silent man with some bitterness.

"So that's what it is!" shouted Arseni Romanych, coming to life again. "Tell me, does the Housing Department know all about this business? And you did not say a single word! I'll go straight back with you and make a statement. Officially! Officially!"

Without looking at anybody, the representative of the Housing Department waddled towards the staircase. Zubinsky saluted Anastasia Germanovna with his usual elegance, indicated with a slight bend of his body that the salute was addressed to a very great extent to Pastukhov and to a very small degree to Dorogomilov and strode swiftly to the door; they could hear his bootsoles slapping on the wooden stairs swaggeringly.

Arseni Romanych folded his arms, his hands covering his chest, and bowed low to Anastasia Germanovna.

"Please pardon my appearance," (he rustled his cuffs) "and the awful way I shouted. Horrible, horrible, like a market peddlar!"

He hurried along the dark corridor with extraordinary agility.

Left alone with his wife, Pastukhov went over to the window. Every minute the renewed tapping of his fingernails

on the windowpane broke the silence. Suddenly he laughed, recalling the amateur of music at the hostel.

"What are you laughing at?" asked Asya.

"There are some people who have so much confidence in themselves that, if you were to ask a peacock like that whether he could play the piano he would answer without batting an eyelid that he did not know as he had never tried but that he thought he probably could. . . ."

"D'you think Zubinsky belongs to that class?"

"Yes, I think so."

"That means you and I are in a jam!" she said merrily; turning to each other they roared with laughter as though nothing whatever has gone wrong and some very alluring adventures lay ahead of them.

Alyosha then came out of his corner and stood between Olga Adamovna and his parents in a position which ensured him a retreat to any of the three points should the necessity arise.

"Papa," he said, "if we are thrown out into the street it would be better if we went to live in the garden, wouldn't it? And Arseni Romanych could live with us as well."

Alexander Vladimirovich stopped laughing, thought a little as he always did in his conversations with his son, frowned at him and then answered seriously:

"Yes, of course, that's what we'll do. It will be a very convenient place for us, we can play with mama and Olga Adamovna at . . . who can spit the farthest. . . ."

11

The next day Pastukhov and his wife were walking along a row of shops which was still called by tradition the "Bishop's Block"; they stopped in front of a newspaper that had just been pasted onto the brick wall and was surrounded by a border of flies where the paste had run over the edges.

The Red Army communiqué was alarming: the fronts were expanding rapidly in the south and the east. The lower and middle Volga were still the cherished objective of the White generals. The simultaneous arrival at the Volga of Denikin's right flank from the Don Steppes and Kolchak's centre from the Transvolga, would mean the junction of the counter-revolutionary forces who were now obviously determined on a decisive drive. The Cossacks of the Ural and Orenburg steppes were to close the last link of the chain of death around the Republic of Soviets. In a battle that involved strategy on a gigantic scale, Saratov was the hilt of a sword whose blade lay along the Volga, with one edge facing the west against Denikin's armies and the other facing east against the Cossacks. It was the immediate objective of the Whites to break this tested and obedient sword of the Bolsheviks and to knock the hilt out of the restless hand of the Revolution; they had reached an agreement amongst themselves not to spare men in carrying out this plan.

The rapidly approaching summer brought to Saratov winds—they all seemed equally hot—from three directions, from the lower reaches of the river where the name Tsaritsyn had been on everybody's lips as it had a year before, from the grain-filled plains of the Don where a new front made a horrible bulge in the line, and from the Transvolga where, in the heart of the steppes, the Cossacks were besieging Uralsk, their biggest settlement, at that time in the hands of the Reds. These winds that constantly increased the velocity of their hot blast were making it difficult to breathe in the city: the people felt that the summer would be a scorcher.

Everybody realized that life in the near and in the most distant future would depend on the Civil War, on the course it took and on its final outcome. In addition to this realization everybody either gave to the war that which it required or refused to submit to its demands, and all were linked together in a common life that was not computed for a wartime but for the peacetime future; furthermore, everybody inevitably had his own personal life to lead, a life that was sometimes concomitant with, and sometimes divorced from the life of the community. All this was interwoven in a pattern that was sometimes colourful, sometimes drab, and which underwent such sudden changes that one hour was never like another.

Detachments of armed workers marched along the roads, dusty men carrying wooden targets over their shoulders. Hos-

pitals rushed truckloads of cots, and offices—truckloads of dilapidated cupboards from place to place. In the schools boys and girls modelled cooks and horses out of pink and green plasticine and arranged exhibitions of their work. In the factories and workshops, people were making hand grenades and filling them with explosives. In the public gardens that lay across the Limes, a crowd of music lovers stood in the twilight in a horseshoe around the platform, listening to a symphony orchestra that had grown small since the war, and watching the antics of the thin-nosed conductor—a noted figure in the town with the same straight hair as Liszt and the dark-blue tinge of Paganini. The Upper Market was surrounded by a cordon of Red Army soldiers and the crowd was being combed for deserters. Congresses of village Soviets and of the poor peasantry were in progress. The cinema showed Leo Tolstoy's *Father Sergius*. There were long lines of people standing at the bakeries waiting for bread. The City Soviet published an order to remove the old tradesmen's signs from all the buildings. Countless church bells rang for vespers. Opposite the old Gubernia Assembly Hall the still indistinct outlines of a revolutionary memorial in cement were taking shape.

After reading the communiqué, Asya and Alexander Vladimirovich exchanged a rapid glance they understood without words. Asya turned back to the newspaper and in a moment exclaimed:

"Look!"

Close together, their heads almost touching, they approached the newspaper that had become dark from the paste which had seeped through.

"ARRIVAL OF A. PASTUKHOV

Alexander Pastukhov, the playwright whose works have often been stormily applauded by theatregoers, has arrived in Saratov. His name should be known not only to theatre enthusiasts in our midst but also in revolutionary circles. At one time Alexander Pastukhov took part in the distribution in our town of underground leaflets against the autocracy and suffered from the tsarist secret police. Local progressive newspapermen took steps to defend him but in vain: the dark forces of the past were unable to forgive a writer who had begun to gain popularity—his sympathy with the oppressed masses, his selfless aid to the revolutionaries. Now that the working class has opened up wide vistas for the creative talents of the people, we may expect that many works will flow from the pen of our fellow townsman, Pastukhov, plays the modern spectator has the right to expect from him. Theatrical people wish him every success and achievement in this important field. Y. M."

They left the newspaper and turned the corner. Asya took her husband's arm. Without looking at him she saw his whole mien: He had drawn his neck into his collar and this gave him a double chin, the lower part of his face grew in size, his lips swelled like ripe pea pods. He was looking into the distance, his eyelids began to flicker as though he were striving to free his eyes of some irritation and then stopped, leaving his eyes half closed.

There was a sudden ringing of bells in the Bishop's Palace, which was immediately answered by the numerous different toned bells of the new cathedral: the reverend bishop drove out of the gate behind his slow-paced, heavy dark bays. The Pastukhovs had to make way for his carriage and saw him through the polished windows of the carriage door—his head in its black mitre was slightly bowed and with his short fat fingers, like little rolls of bread, that peeped out of the pale grey silk of his sleeve, he gave his blessing right and left.

Asya quietly crossed herself.

"Phew! A priest crossed the road," grunted Pastukhov with the obvious intention of showing that he was in a good mood.

"That's no priest, Sasha. He's a monk!"

"And d'you think meeting a monk's a good omen?"

"It certainly is."

"Then that's another matter," he agreed and, wiping his face with his hand, laughed aloud. "Mertsalov! Y. M.! The jesting fool. Done me a good turn!"

"You never told me anything about that business," said Asya with some relief. "Underground, proclamations, revolutionaries... What's it all about?"

"Nonsense! You know all about it—or have you forgotten?—that old story about signing a paper not to leave. I actually was detained here, they tried

to hang something on to me—pin it on to me, in thieves' slang. Rubbish! Sheer invention."

He hesitated, nervously unbuttoning and opening his coat, and then added:

"In any case it's a gross exaggeration. That rusty old progressive is probably cooking up something for his own domestic kitchen, that's all. A meatless dish of provincial chatter. . . ."

"There must have been something? . . ."

"What could there have been? Nothing of any importance. . ."

He whistled shortly, and began to strut and she realized that he had not yet decided what attitude he was going to take towards the services that had been foisted on to him.

"Things of no importance," she cooed wheedling and lovingly. "Even a bagatelle is welcome to poor us, if the bagatelle will do us some good. It is not our fault that things have turned out as they have, it was not even our wish. . . ."

He shrugged his shoulders nervously, she responded with her soundless, joking and very convincing laugh: he answered her sharply:

"But how can I, really . . . it is beneath my dignity. . . ."

She pressed his arm slightly, he frowned and walked in silence the rest of the way home. . . .

Arseni Romanych had insisted from the very beginning that Pastukhov use his study and library because it was difficult to work in the room in which his family lived; Pastukhov had accepted this arrangement. He took his place at the writing desk and cleaned it up, although he realized that this, more than anything else, would disturb the usual habits of the owner. He could not, however, stand the dust and the unnecessary things that lay before his eyes. He thought regretfully of his own desk—the lamp on the tall crystal stand, the pale violet shade, the massive cubic inkwell, the papier-mâché tray with the golden Chinese dragon filled with a whole forest of neatly-sharpened pencils. Asya looked after the pencils: he broke them and she sharpened them and she always placed a bouquet of flowers next to the inkwell—tulips in early spring or sometimes a bunch of narcissi, in winter a branch of azalias, crimson like flames, from a greenhouse; in summer, stocks or simple wild marguerites or two or three long-stemmed pink lupins—each flower according to its season. A dainty procession of perfumes pervaded Alexander Vladimirovich's room; in those varying shades of aroma he found most unexpected things, astounding his wife with his discoveries.

"Asya!" he shouted one day so loudly that the whole apartment shook. "Come here! . . Close your eyes and smell. Do you notice the autumn mushrooms hidden in these pure lilies of the field?"

"Do you think so?" she exclaimed, happy but unbelieving. "Yes, it's true. And they say that lilies have no smell! How could I've never noticed it before! Good Lord, they're real mushrooms! Fried mushrooms!"

"Not fried mushrooms but fresh agaric taken from the rotting stump of a tree. Pale pink mushrooms with rusty spots growing in a bunch on thin yellow legs. Go away, you don't understand anything, your nose is stuffed up with a cold. . . This is my own discovery. Understand? Remember, your husband is a genius. Now go away, noseless, you're hindering my work. . . ."

Dorogomilov's study smelt of mice that even in broad daylight rustled the books somewhere between the wall and the outer wainscotting. The books smelt like books; this is aroma that cannot be compared to anything else. It was especially true of the eighteenth-century books that had gradually travelled from country estates to the town together with impoverished land-owning gentry or sons of priests who had abandoned the presbyteries of their fathers; these were grey and ash-blue books with a faint watermark on their pages—*The New Plutarch*, *Dictionary of Superstitions*, *The Laughing Democritus*. Books of later years that had been "tossed about" on the market, that had been through the hands of booksellers in shops and booths, exuded from their open pages an inimitable smell of staleness or sapwood; they recalled old wine casks or a peeled willow twig—a native aroma saturated with the mustiness of the wood that is now being more and more used for the manufacture of paper. The older rag paper more closely resembles the drawers of a linen chest that have been put out to air or the distant odour of a clothing factory. All these, however, are mere approximations as books smell of books in the same way as wine smells of wine and coal of coal—

it is a smell that has earned for itself its own place amongst the basic phenomena of nature, it is a pure element, not a compound.

Pastukhov placed his watch on the desk beside the inkstand; he worked a lot but always by the watch. As he glanced at the golden second hand, however, he realized that he felt that the usual concentration of fantasy around a single subject would not come to him, that in Dorogomilov's study, on the contrary, his thoughts were dispersed like pollen, were blown hither and thither by the light zephyr of spring. Then he walked over to the bookshelves and, like the Gypsy's parrot pulling out a "fortune" at random, pulled out by its back the first volume that caught his eye.

Usually he chose history. That which formerly seemed the property of university tutors, of rats in record offices or which lay hidden away in files or in textbooks, had now become a living idea to Pastukhov, something that disturbed him as much as his own fate. The storms that had been raging day and night for two years already beyond the walls of Alexander Vladimirovich's unreliable refuges, found response in events of the distant past recorded in these half-forgotten pages. The past had probably only died a sham death together with chronicles that outlived their day but had remained for all time in the blood of the people, throwing up the tongues of ancient flames with the appearance of the beginnings of a new fire, the fire of retribution and the insatiable longing for a better lot in life.

Pastukhov read about the people's wars of Pugachev who appeared before him like a ghost on the yellow bald patches of the hills around Saratov. The former Cossack cornet stood hatless, his fists pressed into his hips, the hot wormwood-bearing autumn wind ruffling his blonde mane; calmly but menacingly he looked down at the little townspeople who breathlessly made their way to the hilltop to lay the keys of the town at the feet of the conqueror. He rode a horse as black as a raven and he himself had something raven-like about him—winged and tempestuous—with his Cossack blade by his side in a silver scabbard resembling a white feather, the neck of his crimson shirt thrown open under his long coat; so he rode through the open gates of Tsaritsyn and the people threw their caps into the air and ran after his horse, noisily shouting their complaints against the enemies who oppressed them. At eventide, to the clamour of cathedral bells, he ascended a platform covered with Persian rugs taken from the rich, and gracefully accepted the oaths of the citizens while the freemen of his following, with the agile hands of soldiers, hanged on the Tavern Square the aristocrats they had caught, the tsar's placemen and the spiteful petty merchants; and the same hot wind, bitter with the wormwood of the steppes, swayed the bodies of the hanged, swirled around them and passed on to the Transvolga.

This eternal wind carried Pastukhov away from the Pugachev lands, through the yellow hills, across the Volga, a good hundred and fifty versts across the steppes and a good hundred and fifty years nearer to the present.

He heard the hoofbeats of a white horse and the whistle of breath from its nostrils. And on the horse, leaning over its mane and neck, a fur cap pressed down on his head, rode a horseman with a blonde moustache and wrinkled eyes under knitted brows; behind the horseman, in waves like the corn in the fields, came the dashing regiments of horsemen. The rider was a carpenter from Balakov, a man who had been promoted to subaltern from the ranks and who had now gathered a host of horse and foot in the Transvolga steppes to defend the Revolution against the Urals Cossack settlements that had risen against it. Under the banner of the Bolsheviks he, the Red Commander Vassili Chapayev, brought punishment and death to the selfish old world through the generous and heavy hand of the people. The Oriental gutturals of his name—Chapai, Chapayev—flashed ahead of him throughout the Urals, along the entire length of the Volga. Like a born master of the steppes he captured the towns and villages of the grasslands and gave them new names—an imperative godfather—and rode on and on, driving his white horse from the Uzen to the Ural, from the Irghiz to the Belaya. Burned by that same indomitable wormwood-ridden hot August wind he won back from the Whites his native town of Nikolayevsk when he led his First Emelyan Pugachev Regi-

nt into attack against Czech artillery; on the strength of the Soviet power of workers and peasants he replaced the old regal name of his town by Pugachevsk; as his horsemen charged at a mad gallop, their battle cry thundered over the wide and free open spaces—"Surrender Pugach! Surrende-e-e-er!"

This had happened nine months before the spring day when Pastukhov thought of Emelyan Pugachev and Vassili Chapayev, seeking the analogies and differences between the free fighters of the former and the Red Army troops of the latter. Today Vassili Chapayev was fighting far from Pugachevsk, battering and destroying Kappel's Officers' Corps. Other towns had seen Chapayev's horsemen, names that carried still other strains of Transvolga music, the roll of drums—Buzuluk, Buguruslan, Bugulma, Belebei.

No matter how the music of the names might change, no matter how fast events moved forward or whirled in mad circles, Pastukhov could still feel the irresistibly challenging beat of the wind-borne wormwood that swept over the huge plains of Southeast Russia joining them up with time and emotions. He thought that the fate of the people, century by century, had been determined in this wormwood-laden call of the southeast. Here the durability of the Russian lance was tested, her men measured the strength of their swords, here the whistling of the Cossacks matched the whistling of bullets.

From the Battle of Kulikovo to Stepan Razin, from Pugachev to the elusive freemen of the lower Volga, in that corner of the steppes where two great waterways, brother and sister, drew near to each other only to part company again—the rattle of swords carved out the history of the people's fame, of popular discontent and popular wrath. And here again, in this bitter-sweet corner of the steppes, but a few months past, in the town that formed the key to the lower Volga and which still bore the regal name of Tsaritsyn, the first of the great strategical clashes for bread, freedom and Soviet power had been fought. Again, at that very moment, in the new spring, still in these same steppes of the southeast, an oppressive cloud hung in the new heat; the Don Cossacks were rattling their sabres. The peasantry and the workers of the Volga had wheeled their guns to the tops of the ancient burial mounds. . . .

A light tap at the door made Pastukhov shudder: Arseni Romanych looked into the room with an apologetic glance, awed by his own inexcusable temerity. No, no, he did not wish to disturb Pastukhov, he would only come in for a second and would go away again immediately to boil his chowder of Caspian roach. There was something new he wanted to mention but that could wait.

"Do come on in, please, it's your own house! You make me feel uncomfortable, by God, you do! I am not doing anything. I'm just glancing over Solovyov's history. Something about our eviction?"

No, there was no further news about the eviction. Arseni Romanych's protest had not yet been considered and the military authorities had not made themselves heard again.

"We'll live as long as we can, and we're still alive!" said Dorogomilov encouragingly. "But there is another piece of news."

He pulled a newspaper out of his side pocket and opened it.

"About you," he said in a tone of respect.

"Oh, that," answered Pastukhov quickly, "I've read it."

"You have? I've also read it and I'm very, very glad."

"Glad?"

"I know you would never have said yourself that you are a servant of the people, as well as of Melpomene."

"No, you know," Pastukhov seemed to be refusing the undeserved honour.

"I was just wondering which case you could have been connected with. Judging by the time it must have been the Ragozin case. Was it?"

"It was, in a way, if you like," said Pastukhov unwillingly, walking away to the window. "Don't talk about it!"

"I understand, I can understand you quite well!" exclaimed Arseni Romanych taking a step forward and immediately returning again in shy indecision. "This story in the newspaper sort of wounds your modesty, doesn't it? You will excuse me, but I understand it so well, a man can't talk about himself like that, he just can't say, I, you know, suffered for the people and have done service to the Revolution. It may even

be unpleasant if somebody else makes the statement—look, he may say, there goes one who, in his way, is an historic figure.In general,it's not nice. I wouldn't say a word about myself even if I had done anything for the success of the movement in the past. . . ."

"If you have, then why not say so?" asked Pastukhov convincingly.

"No, no, no! How can you!" Arseni Romanych waved his arms in sheer fright. "No! Why did I get so excited? As I read the story I wondered whether you also . . . that is, whether you took part in the Ragozin affair. The idea came to me, you know . . . or rather I put myself in your place and thought that you would no doubt be interested to know how it all turned out. . . ."

"How, what turned out?"

"That is, no, no! Perhaps you were much more closely . . . yes, most certainly, most certainly, you were much more closely connected with it and know everything down to the last little detail! . . ."

"Know what?"

Dorogomilov clasped his hands with his fingers intertwined, rubbed his palms together, and pressed them to his breast, the pink cheeks of old age burned through his tousle of grey beard, he rose up on tiptoe as though trying to look at something, and Pastukhov looked at him with that hunger that he always felt when there was something he couldn't understand.

"I was thinking that if you were mixed up in that case I, as your friend, should perhaps tell you what I personally know. . . ."

"Arseni Romanych, then please say it, in the name of the Creator!"

"No, no! Please don't jump to conclusions, and I will even ask you to give me your word, that you will not imagine that I want to figure in a way or even create the impression that I am also some sort of a revolutionary, that I want to stand in the same ranks as you, Alexander Vladimirovich — no, no! I haven't told anybody."

"Arseni Romanych!"

"Please, now, please!"

Dorogomilov unclasped his hands, placed the paper carefully on the table, ran his fingernail along the fold in it and, having regained his self-possession, said softly:

"You will no doubt be interested to know that Pyotr Petrovich Ragozin did not leave Saratov when the hue and cry was out in 1910 but remained. . . ."

Arseni Romanych sighed deeply and raised his trembling hand slightly to point to the narrow side door.

". . . in there."

"In your house?"

"In that library."

"So you. . ." said Pastukhov but Dorogomilov would not let him speak.

"I ask you and please understand: I don't want to talk about myself, only about Pyotr Petrovich. He came to me not because I took any part at all in the business like, let us say, you, but just the opposite—because I had no connection, absolutely none, with the whole business. When the underground party committee learned that there was to be a mass roundup, an old friend of mine who belonged to the committee came and told me that there was a very good man who had to be hidden and that my apartment was absolutely safe for the purpose because everybody thought of me as (here Arseni Romanych smiled his childish and at the same time cunning smile and then sighed expansively) . . . well, that is to say, they regarded me as a sort of village idiot. He didn't say so as plainly as that but I understood and agreed, there's no reason to hide it, I consented because, believe me, it was so. Then the good man came to me and I hid him here. . . ."

Dorogomilov ran over to the library, waved his hand in the air between the shelves, stepped back, went over to the old sofa with the scratched yellow leather seat and laying both hands on it, finished with great emotion:

"I installed Pyotr Petrovich on this sofa, there, behind those bookshelves."

Arseni Romanych adopted a somewhat ceremonial attitude, throwing back his hair, adjusting his frock coat and waiting to see what Pastukhov would say.

Alexander Vladimirovich walked into the little library, stood in front of the shelves, sat on the sofa, lightly stroked its cool, polished back then took out his cigarette case and began rolling a cigarette between his fingers.

"Did he stay here long, behind your bookshelves?"

"Twenty - seven days!" answered Dorogomilov without hesitation.

"And never went out?"

"Never."

"But how did he. . . ."

"I got everything for him that he needed. . . ."

"But what did he do for the whole month?"

"Read."

"Read?"

"Yes. Excuse me, what book's that? Solovyov? He read Solovyov. In some of the books he even left marginal notes in pencil."

Dorogomilov took up a book from the table and rapidly ran through the pages.

"Here, look at this. . . ."

Pastukhov saw an illegible note written across a passage that had been underscored, and rapidly read the marked lines. It was a warrant issued by Pugachev in which, by the grace of his Imperial Majesty, he granted all his followers ". . . river and earth, plant life and seas, and pecuniary emoluments, and provisions, and lead, and powder, and eternal liberty. . . ."

"Can you read what is written here?"

"Yes;" said Dorogomilov and read the words "So it shall be."

"Did Ragozin write that?"

"Yes, Pyotr Petrovich wrote it."

Pastukhov rose from his seat surrounded by a cloud of tobacco smoke and stood still for a long time, his immobility arousing silent and respectful anticipation.

"What is that—succession from one generation to another?"

"In what respect?" Dorogomilov did not understand him.

"Before you came in I was reading about Pugachev and thinking of what is occurring beyond the Volga, on the Don and all over Russia. The powder-train that was laid in those days is burning today. The great grandchildren of the free Cossacks are galloping across the steppes."

"Yes, and no!" said Dorogomilov hurriedly. "The justice of the people which was stopped by force and which has since then started and broken off many times, is now continuing, that's true. But the present aim is not only justice and punishment, is it? The present purpose, of course, is the building of a new society, now isn't it?"

"But you see: Ragozin himself underscored the promises made by Pugachev, eh?"

"Ragozin underscored his aspirations, his noble aspirations! He does not say that Pugachev's free Cossacks must necessarily exist. He stressed the future that was contained in Pugachev's admonition and not the past."

"But don't you think, my dear Arseni Romanych, that the people with the impulsiveness of their justice, with the free play of their passions, are implanting that past more firmly rather than uprooting it?"

"Never, Alexander Vladimirovich, never, I say, for where the people uproot they also plant!"

"I should like to be able to think as you do! But will the avenging flood not sweep away the weak saplings that we can scarcely see in its whirlpool?"

"Weak? You call them weak? The flood itself can be turned from its course by one of those saplings—the great idea of planting a state based on the government of the people. That all-destroying flood is directed by the new state! By that weak sapling, as you call it!"

"Can't you hear blind spontaneity in the howl and hoofbeats of the horsemen in our part of the world?"

"If everything magnificent can be called spontaneity! And that howl and those hoofbeats do not belong to this part of the world alone. I hear something else. The deathless word has been spoken, the word of the power of labour that joins the distant parts of the country into one whole!"

"And indivisible?"

"And indivisible!"

"But that's what they also say on the Don, Arseni Romanych. . . ."

Pastukhov seemed to be egging him on, admiring the sacred earnestness with which Dorogomilov explained his convictions. Pastukhov's jesting did not, however, prevent the flames of faith from burning in the grey-haired, untidy old man. Pastukhov felt that the discussion would lead them to the most important thing of all, that of which he had been thinking more and more each day—his place in the events of the day.

"On the Don!" exclaimed Dorogomilov indignantly, and even turned away to show that he very definitely did not want to connect himself with any such conclusion. "There they speak of the indivisible Russia of the past. And here

the people are sweeping away that past to such an extent that. . . ."

Dorogomilov suddenly seized Pastukhov by the lapel of his coat and, tugging at it with every word, said in a serious and rapturous burst of enthusiasm:

". . . the people will be compelled to take their future into their own hands and out of necessity will build a world that is completely different. That is what we sing in the anthem! Yes, and it will be a magnificent feat!"

He was so shy of this outburst coming straight from the heart, that he moved to one side immediately he had uttered the word "feat".

This idea astounded Pastukhov. The way in which the word "necessity" was said first made clear to him the idea of imperativeness and predetermination as though the new world must needs appear. The fact that these words were said by an old man and without any fear or apprehension for the future, said, indeed, with the enthusiasm of youth, gave them the strength of prophecy, which operated like any other strength and produced in Pastukhov a desire to submit. He was, however, far too used to opposing every fact that came his way and immediately realized the ridiculous side of his desire: just imagine his falling into the arms of this eccentric old fellow in a frock coat and suddenly acknowledging him as the greatest of all prophets—other prophets had never yet succeeded in convincing Pastukhov of anything! He waited until the desire to mingle his feelings with those of Arseni Romanych had passed.

"Are you convinced," said Pastukhov, "that reason will conquer the passions before they subordinate events to themselves?"

"Reason does not intend to combat passions but to guide them?"

"With the compass of the Ragozins?"

"And do you doubt it? With your compass, unless you have allowed it to fall from your hands since the time when you held it together with Ragozin."

Suddenly Dorogomilov's look of agitation disappeared and he stared at Pastukhov with cold, hard eyes, as though trying him out. There was not a trace of respect left in his voice and it seemed as though there was no longer any fear of offending Pastukhov's modesty; he was putting Pastukhov to a test, a searching examination and, like an examiner who has resolved to pin down a pupil who is avoiding a direct answer, Dorogomilov asked without any equivocation:

"Perhaps, Alexander Vladimirovich, you have given up Ragozin's views in the time that has passed, and have joined another party?"

Despite the very ordinary nature of this conversation about parties, the question seemed an unusual one to Pastukhov, and for a second it confused him and was almost insulting because of the inquisitorial tone and the deliberate intention of forcing him to give a direct answer. Furthermore, Pastukhov had ceased to be the observer and had become the observed and this greatly lowered him in his own esteem. It would, however, have been weak on his part to take offence and following his usual custom under such circumstances he resorted to his favourite gesture of wiping his face. He rubbed his hand over his face, blinked and laughed light-heartedly.

"My dear Arseni Romanych, I have never belonged to any party and do not intend to join any. As far as my adventures in the Ragozin case are concerned I will tell you the whole story another time. But you tell me what happened to Ragozin when he was here in your apartment."

"Oh, yes, yes," Arseni Romanych hastened to regain his air of fussy amiability. "The wonderful thing was that I did not then know who was hiding here."

"How was that?"

"I realized, of course, that I could not enquire, I would not have got a direct refusal but a useless answer, a false name. I did not even think of asking. It was a year later that I learned who the good man was. And do you know, although a whole year had passed, I got quite scared!"

Arseni Romanych smiled with pleasant satisfaction.

"Afraid a year later?" Again Pastukhov laughed.

"Yes, afraid a year later! There was so much said in the town about that name."

"And how did it end?"

"It ended very simply. On the night of the twenty-seventh day I took Pyotr Petrovich down to the river where a

small boat had been left for him and he rowed away downstream to the village of Rybushki where he told me he was to board a steamer. I suppose that's what happened. I did not ask him whether he was travelling upriver or down and we had already arranged that he should abandon the boat. From that night I did not see him until the Revolution: when he returned I heard him speak at a meeting."

"He's here?" exclaimed Pastukhov.

"Didn't you know?" Dorogomilov was also surprised.

"And you have not met him?"

"No."

"But pardon me," said Alexander Vladimirovich throwing up his hands, "pardon me. Why have you given yourself so much worry and trouble with that municipal office of yours when all you had to do was go to Ragozin and he would have given you a palace with honours and music!"

"But why should I?" asked Dorogomilov cocking his head to one side.

"Why, you funny man? Because you saved his life, of course!"

Dorogomilov shrank into himself, as though he had got a sudden chill and spoke in injured tones.

"I would die of shame rather than do such a thing."

Just at that moment voices sounded from the corridor that grew ever stronger and stronger, first women's voices and then a man's, a very full voice with oily modulations; Pastukhov, feeling an unpleasant shyness in front of the offended Arseni Romanych, was overjoyed at this unexpected salvation. He listened carefully to the voices and with a feeling of relief recognized that peculiar male voice; he rushed to the door.

"Tsvetukhin! Tsvetukhin has come!"

12

When Egor Pavlovich shaved off his moustache, the world realized that he had a slightly upturned nose and a protruding lower lip which closed up like a lid at the end of every phrase he spoke. It is possible that he had originally worn a moustache to hide this defect, and it is also possible that he shaved it off to soften the traces time had left on his face.

Behind this unexpected lip and those wrinkles, however, Pastukhov recognized the old Tsvetukhin—student, visionary, the favourite of the public, the slightly ostentatious, bronzed and handsome young man—and for a second, experienced a deep emotion. As they embraced they both felt a flood of that common youthfulness that had bound them together in the past.

Egor Pavlovich, however, was playful from the very beginning and adopted the jocular, even ridiculing tone of independent people who wish to show that they will stick up for themselves should their sense of equality be injured by somebody else's superiority. This is one of those pin-pricking failings that prevent unconstrained relations between even the most refined provincial people and the fine gentlemen from the capital. Fear of a slight frequently robs these proud provincials of the opportunity of showing their own superiority over the city gentlemen.

If the first meeting between these two friends had taken place in private it would have been different. But here Tsvetukhin was being studied jointly by Anastasia Germanovna who greeted him with an attractive, even if somewhat theatrical, welcome; and by the excited Dorogomilov who, he had heard, was his devoted admirer. In addition to this the meeting was accompanied by a funny incident that also put Pastukhov in a playful mood so that, contrary to expectations, everything went slightly awry.

Tsvetukhin had brought with him a girl whom he introduced simply as "Anochka—my pupil." It appeared that she knew Dorogomilov but despite this was extremely bashful at first and immediately dropped back into the shadows behind a bookrack with a politely entreating expression on her face that seemed to ask that she be forgotten. She looked out from her shelter, peering with special attention at the Pastukhovs.

"Well, you old revolutionary?" was Tsvetukhin's second word after his greeting. "Have you come back here to fight?"

He rubbed his hands with gleeful gusto as much as to say: "Well, I'm ready for you, anyway."

"I hear that you are one of the local fighters yourself!" laughed Pastukhov. "Do you want to pull down the theatre?"

"Pull it down? Why we're turning the

theatre inside out, like the costumiers do our props. We're making velvet hangings out of a doormat. And here you come like a gift from the gods, only you're out of our reach, too high up for us. Made the revolution! Suffered from the tsarist secret police!"

One of Tsvetukhin's eyes flickered but not enough to suggest that it might be a wink.

"But where do I come in?" asked Pastukhov and his smile became fixed. "That business was all your Mertsalov's doing."

"Ours or not ours! Mertsalov or no Mertsalov! The whole town is talking about the r-r-revolutionary activities of one Alexander Pastukhov."

"And is that so bad?" asked Anastasia Germanovna in pretended fright.

"Certainly not!" shouted Tsvetukhin and immediately reduced his voice to a whisper, covering his lips with his forefinger. "It's very, very good! Excellent! And, *entre nous*, timely to the highest possible degree!"

He laughed loudly and his eye flickered again.

"Have you got St. Vitus' Dance?" enquired Pastukhov.

Tsvetukhin felt his face and assumed a very worried mien.

"Twitches, eh? Why St. Vitus' Dance? Have you noticed something amiss? You have floored me. Anochka! Do I twitch?"

"Your eye keeps twitching," said Pastukhov.

"Oh, the eye," and Tsvetukhin laughed again. "That's because it was blinded by the sight of a battle-scarred revolutionary!"

"All right, all right, after all we travelled our valiant and noble path together. . . ."

"Are you quite sure?" asked Tsvetukhin softly and seriously.

"Am I sure? I remember how you trembled at the very thought of the gendarmerie."

Tsvetukhin's face acquired a strangely vague look.

"I'm glad you're not quite sure of it," he said vacantly, paused for a moment and then asked still more seriously: "Haven't you ever thought that that might have been conspiracy on my part?"

"You mean you trembled in order to maintain secrecy?"

"That's just it—for the sake of conspiracy."

"Conspiring against whom?"

"Against you."

They looked at each other in silence, Tsvetukhin with a very significant look that showed him the possessor of a great secret, his friend blinking rapidly.

Suddenly Egor Pavlovich burst out laughing, fell on Pastukhov, threw his arms round his heavy body and slapping both his hands on his back, with a swing of a man warming up in a frost, began shouting between his roars of laughter.

"He believed it! Believed it!"

This made everybody happy and Pastukhov, freeing himself from his friend's grasp, chanted merrily.

"All right, go to hell, you damned comedian. . . ."

"We'll return to the subject of your life-story later. In the meantime I've two questions to ask. Firstly: do you drink?"

"Have you got anything?" asked Pastukhov doubtingly.

Tsvetukhin threw back the skirt of his jacket to show a bulging trouser pocket.

"I don't believe you," muttered Pastukhov jumbling all his words together.

Tsvetukhin slowly brought to light a bottle filled with a brownish fluid.

"I don't believe it," Alexander Vladimirovich repeated coldly.

Tsvetukhin's glance travelled round the room in search of an icon and seeing none he crossed himself bowing to the window.

"I still don't believe you. What is that stuff?"

Tsvetukhin frowned and shook his head.

"What sort of poison is that, I ask you, comedian?"

"First fruits," announced Tsvetukhin in a stage whisper, raising his brows as high as he could.

"Impossible," said Alexander Vladimirovich in an awed whisper. "Unthinkable. Not even probable. It contradicts the very nature of human reason. I'll kill you if you're lying, Egor!"

"Anochka, help me!" appealed Tsvetukhin.

"Is there even a grain of truth in what this irrational being says?" asked Alexander Vladimirovich severely. "Do the contents of that ill-shapen vessel

include anything in the nature of alcohol?"

"I'm afraid they do," Anochka laughed from her hiding place.

Pastukhov took the bottle from Egor Pavlovich, held it up to the light, peered thoughtfully into the murky liquid and then shouted out suddenly:

"A-a-sya! Get the brawn on the table immediately!"

"Good Lord, what a lot of noise!" answered Asya with a timid look but at the same time smiling pleasantly at Anochka, her natural ally.

"Fish!" Dorogomilov exclaimed unexpectedly in a thin voice. "The spring vobla of Astrakhan are already here!"

Since the guests arrived he had not said a single word, at first not understanding what was going on—were the friends quarrelling or joking, and then he began to feel the attractiveness of Tsvetukhin's playful modulations. Egor Pavlovich had formerly been the cause of some of his profoundly intimate emotions. The actor had been part of a spectacle divided from him by an uncrossable Rubicon: he had acted and Dorogomilov had watched. Now there was no Rubicon and the spectacle had come into his own home demanding from Dorogomilov not contemplation but action on an equal footing with the actor. It was unbelievable: Arseni Romanych was on the stage acting in a play together with Tsvetukhin!

After his one exclamation about the fish, Arseni Romanych grew shy again because everybody looked at him in expectation—what would he do?.. and he absolutely had to do something. Pastukhov looked at his waving tufts of hair with as much astonishment as though the grey locks had suddenly come to life on a dummy in a hairdresser's window. Dorogomilov shut up like a clam. Alexander Vladimirovich went over to him, touched him lightly under the elbow and bending forward spoke to him in tones of tormented sensuality.

"Dear Arseni Romanych! Beat it! Beat it! Beat it hard against the corner of the stove until the juice begins to run out. And then, my dear fellow, skin it and then cut off the flesh in little narrow strips, cut them from the back, from the fleshy part. Cut them from tail to head."

Tsvetukhin screwed his eyes up tightly.

"In strips, little strips like this," implored Pastukhov also screwing up his eyes.

"I feel it! I feel that you are a real Volga man, I understand you perfectly!" exclaimed Dorogomilov again, and all of them began moving in response to an urgent desire to get the table set.

Egor Pavlovich, however, stopped the commotion with the gestures of an orchestra conductor, glided over to where Anochka stood, took her by her unwilling hand and drew her into the centre of the room.

"Before we drink to our new meeting," he said pompously, "we have to settle a technical problem that will not tolerate procrastination. Fate has laid its cold hand on this young lady. . . ."

"Egor Pavlovich, please, don't, really, you mustn't," protested Anochka. Her whole face flushed a deep crimson and she pulled back awkwardly trying to release her hand. "I feel quite all right."

"You needn't be shy," Anastasia Germanovna said encouragingly and then added with feminine intuition: "Your heel has broken off, hasn't it?"

"The poor girl is standing on a single nail," put in Egor Pavlovich excitedly. "I must confess it was my fault. We were crossing the tramlines. Anochka caught the heel of her shoe in the line—crack!—and it was gone. I rushed to help her, found a cobblestone and began to bang in this huge spike from under the inner sole—awful thing! But there was nothing else I could do. How did we get here? It is beyond my comprehension. . . ."

"How did *you* get here," asked Pastukhov slyly.

"What do you mean?" Egor Pavlovich did not immediately understand but then hesitated and said:

"So what of it?"

"Nothing much. You were talking about poor Anochka, weren't you? Or perhaps you too have a nail in your boot?"

"Of course it was about Anochka. Of course . . . my heart is not made of iron, eh?"

"No, it's not iron," agreed Pastukhov rapidly.

"You take your shoes off," said Anastasia Germanovna as softly and confidentially as though she were giving advice on some secret matter.

Egor Pavlovich pushed a chair forward for Anochka. She sat down. He

dropped gracefully on to one knee to help her remove her shoe. But she immediately jumped up and ran limping behind the bookrack, threw out the damaged shoe and stood with one leg held up like a stork. And all her confusion disappeared completely—she looked playfully at everybody as she followed the details of the exaggerated disturbance created by Egor Pavlovich.

Dorogomilov fussily sought the necessary tools in his fantastic household, with a rattle, clatter and banging raked over the drawers of his writing desk exuding the dust of centuries, sneezed, snorted and muttered about all the boys that were an eternal trial to his love of order. He found a few useful things: a little vise, a nickel-plated anvil and a pair of sugar tongs. The hammer, as though out of perversion, remained hidden.

Alexander Vladimirovich followed Tsvetukhin's fussiness with an artful and amused glance. Egor Pavlovich, moving from place to place, pressed Anochka's shoe to himself, looked into it, touched the nail with his finger, with an expression of complete despair on his face. Pastukhov seemed almost to have got hold of the key to the riddle and he was amused by the comical scene. When the hammer was eventually found and Tsvetukhin seized it zealously from Arseni Romanych's hands, Pastukhov said:

"Excuse me, dear mademoiselle, but which of the three knights would you prefer as your shoemaker?"

Still standing on one leg so that the bent knee of the other, encased in a fashionable flesh-coloured stocking, peeped out below her short skirt, Anochka looked penetratingly at Alexander Vladimirovich.

"My name is Anya or Anochka. I should be thankful to see the heel properly nailed on."

It seemed to Pastukhov that this was not the same girl who had hidden her face behind the bookrack when she first came in and was especially astonished at her voice in which there was a stern, womanly note.

"Don't worry, Anochka, I'll do it now, I'll do it!" said Egor Pavlovich bending over the windowsill and fixing some sort of device for his cobbling. "Of course, you've forgotten, Alexander. Anochka and I remembered a little while ago that you once called her a siren. She was a big-eyed little girl with a pigtail—remember?"

"Yes, I think I do," answered Pastukhov lazily and again began watching Tsvetukhin frantically struggling with the nail.

While the cobbling was in progress, Anastasia Germanovna was busy at the table and they could hear how Arseni Romanych was faithfully following Pastukhov's culinary advice: the dull battering of the fish against the iron hob in the kitchen was a sort of echo to Tsvetukhin's irregular hammering.

At last when the work was finished they all sat down—the table was inconvenient as it was a writing desk the drawers of which left them no place for their feet. The men sat on one side and, opposite them were Anochka and Anastasia Germanovna.

Three wine glasses were filled (the ladies had laughingly but decisively refused to drink) and when Egor Pavlovich reached for his glass and opened his mouth to pronounce the first toast, Pastukhov stopped him.

"Wait. I don't know what you have brought, perhaps it's poison for the cockroaches. The fair sex have good reason to spurn it. But I want to announce the dish with which I shall regale our respected guests. The dish that gleams like resin before your eyes is known as Noble Brawn."

"We just call it brawn," insisted Tsvetukhin.

"You may call it what you like. But I tell you this, that in the taverns, whence came its fame, the dish is called Noble Brawn. Real brawn is not made from pork or veal or anything else. Real brawn can only be made from beef. Only the heels of the cow are used. From the head just the lips are permissible. The decoction should be so thick that a spoon will stand up in it, it may lean to one side but must not fall. It must not seeth but patiently simmer and for this purpose a Russian stove is indicated, a kitchen hob being out of the question."

"Mercy!" groaned Egor Pavlovich, shuddering in impatience.

"When the jelly cools it should be as resilient as rubber and as transparent as the *elektron* of the ancients—amber in common parlance—while the fatty

surface must have a faintly smoky hue. This concoction was eaten by the boyars in old Rus, hence its name—Noble Brawn. I personally selected the ox hoofs on the market. We have a lady attending us, Olga Adamovna, who cursed as she singed them under my supervision. Asya went to the neighbours where, under the protection of our highly-esteemed Arseni Romanych, she fired the stove and juggled with the grapple, moving the iron pots within its bowels. Moulds with the finished product cooled off in the ice cellar of another neighbour. The result is the miracle which lies on your plates before you. I propose the first toast to Asya."

He raised his glass to his lips but stopped short.

"What's the matter?"

He looked at his companions with the horror of a dying man.

"Aha!" exclaimed Tsvetukhin spitefully. "Now you can wait. I will not allow myself to be outdone by your brawn. The product which I offer you comes straight from the people. (He tapped his fingernail against the bottle). There is, of course, a liquor of a higher degree. That, however, is purely aeronautical. There is little petrol available at the moment and our Nieuports fly on pure alcohol so that together with the airmen it is possible to rise to unattainable heights. In civilian society one does not fly higher than this. It is a sylvan legend. It is born in the depths of the gullies, in the heart of forest groves, it begins life in the womb of an earthen oven as big as your Russian stove. Every oven is like the altar of a secret deity. A faint smoke curls upwards, winds its way through the lacery of the tree tops to heaven, and lo, drop by drop, like the first thaws in March, the warm fluid drips from a pipe into a bucket, telling the sylvan legend in its soft ringing sounds. The first bottle of this sylvan legend bears the name—First Fruits. That is, when the wine is distilled from corn; if it comes from melons it is known as *nardyak*, if. . . ."

"Very poetic," said Pastukhov. "But you bore one to death with your narrative style."

Egor Pavlovich cast a worried side glance at Anochka. She looked sad and listened to the Epicurean contest without displaying any interest whatsoever.

"Wait," said Tsvetukhin, gathering fresh courage.

"Don't bother," objected Pastukhov. "Even a Meistersinger will not convince me that a man may swallow this evil yellow poison brewed in the belly of a viper. I am certain the doctors forbid it."

"Doctors are strange men!" Egor Pavlovich clapped his hands. "They should be crowned with laurels on the town square and have a ring of children dancing round like around a Christmas tree, they should be given a pension before they even leave the universities . . . if only they would admit that which has been definitely proved since the days of old man Noah—that alcohol has a beneficent effect on man! You may believe my intuition, they will come to this some day! They will prescribe the reasonable use of the bowl for all mankind. And they will grow rich! They will be famed before all other men! And they will close the book of medicine for all time as being no longer necessary."

"Amen!" said Pastukhov.

He leaned on Egor Pavlovich's shoulder, winked at Asya, raised his glass and added another toast.

"To the golden slipper!"

With a devilish glint in his eye he looked at Anochka, pinched his nose between the thumb and forefinger of his left hand and tossed off the glass of moonshine; he winced and groaned.

"You are a marvelous prophet, Egor."

"You don't need any eloquence to be persuaded," said Anastasia Germanovna tenderly.

"How well you know me, Asenka," he answered and poured himself another glass.

The feast now gathered tempo at a rate comparable only to the length of time the start had been delayed.

"Listen, Egor," said Alexander Vladimirovich, when the bottle was half empty, "where do you acquire this exceptionally fine cherry brandy?"

"It is not so easy to acquire. I have two bosom friends who always help me out in time of need. Do you still remember Mefodi Silych—a worshipper at the feet of the Muses, my table boon? No? You Petersburgians have short memories."

"Drop it, please. In the first place,

I remember everything very well. In the second place why do you place yourself above the Petersburgians? Proud of the heart of the land!"

"Call it the 'heart of the Russian land.' You're a Petersburg Russian, the sort that, as Dostoyevsky wrote, don't breakfast, but take their Frühstück. . . ."

"D'you mean I am of the Frühstück brand?" Alexander Vladimirovich was offended. "That I take my Frühstück of brawn tinged with the smoke of fires? With your brew of burnt cork dissolved in engine oil? You're welcome to such a Frühstück!"

"Thank you. With the greatest pleasure. And you are not so much offended at the "Frühstück" as you are at the fact that you have forgotten Mefodi. I suppose you don't remember Anochka's father either? Tikhon Platonych Parabukin, eh? It is a disgrace to have forgotten him! It was through him that you suffered for the Revolution, wasn't it?"

Pastukhov got up, pushed back his chair, and walked gloomily to the window and back.

"D'you know, Egor Pavlovich, I do not like your tone! What are you trying to say? That I wrote that nonsensical newspaper article myself?"

"You're crazy!" exclaimed Tsvetukhin and even jumped to his feet.

"Stop. I want to speak seriously. Today there are many people in a great hurry to declare that at some time or other they have done their share for the Revolution. It is petty but it is understandable. As you put it yourself, it is timely. What do you want me to do? Run out and announce that I have never rendered any services to the Revolution? That would be sheer idiocy! Just try to imagine it: that Mertsalov fellow has credited me with participation in propaganda against tsarism. I go to the newspaper offices and say. . . What should I say? That I have been slandered? That the article is not true? They will tell me that the editor has been misled by one of his respected contributors. But what can he do? Publish a denial? That Pastukhov was against the Revolution? My humble thanks! That could hardly be called timely! And why should I regard Mertsalov as a slanderer? He wished me well! He was, so to say, opening the way for me! He invented for me something that thousands of people, great and small, are selling their souls for in order to protect themselves from the merciless course of events. He wanted to make my career easier under the new conditions. Shall he be hanged for that? Furthermore that kind-hearted old man may have been genuinely misled. After all, he did appeal to the town prosecutor on my behalf. The secret police were interested in me. I did have to sign a paper to the effect that I would not leave the town. All that is quite true. If Mertsalov is guilty of anything, it is of exaggeration. He cannot be arrested for exaggerating. Nowadays people pay bribes for such an exaggeration when the opportunity presents itself. Therefore, I should not go to the newspaper with a denial but should write a letter of thanks to Mertsalov—I have the honour to be your obedient servant—Phew!"

Alexander Vladimirovich actually spat out the last word, walked over to the window, broke off a piece of putty and threw it on the floor.

"And there was really nothing of the kind, Sasha?" asked Anastasia Germanovna, apparently disappointed. "No underground, no leaflets?"

"It's nothing but a joke!" he waved his hand disdainfully.

"Then treat it as a joke," she said brightly and guilelessly looking round at the company.

"But it is only you four here who know that it is a joke!" shouted Pastukhov, turning round sharply from the window. "The newspaper does not say that it is a joke! People who read it will believe that it's true."

"Then let them think so," Anastasia Germanovna consoled him still more guilelessly and in most sugary tones. "Will it do you any harm?"

"You don't understand. If it later becomes known that it is not true, everybody will think that I went to the offices, that I tried to ingratiate myself, that I wheedle my way in good with the authorities, in plain language that I am a liar! See how my own friends regard me. Look at Arseni Romanych! Look at Egor who also suspected me of the devil knows what!"

"I didn't suspect you of anything. You have apparently forgotten me as

well, if you dream that I would think ill of you," said Tsvetukhin bitterly.

This sudden change in tone seemed to bring sobriety with it. Pastukhov sat down at the table, stuck the end of a narrow strip of vobla into his mouth and then sucked it in with his lips in the way an already well-fed horse takes up hay. He was silent for some time and then laughed rather uncomfortably.

"Why are you so quiet, Arseni Romanych?"

Dorogomilov gave a start, nervously stroked his beard as though he were making ready for a profound speech but simply answered briefly, pausing frequently and in the wrong places.

"Really it panned out . . . there was some difficulty . . . not quite. . . ."

He coughed and apparently did not intend to continue.

"It was a matter of some difficulty to understand me?" asked Pastukhov.

"No, about that business with the newspaper. . . In the sense that it was not very pleasant for you to have the public misled . . . concerning specific services. Which, of course, were . . . services . . . however. . . ."

He stammered in his effort to get around an unpleasant thought. Anastasia Germanovna came to his rescue with that smile of hers that made light of all difficulties.

"And why does everybody necessarily have to have performed some special service? We don't demand that a railway engineer should perform some special services over and above those of his profession. He may not even be of use at his own job. It is enough that he is an engineer."

"I realized that Alexander Vladimirovich was worried by the fact that these services had been ascribed to the wrong person," replied Dorogomilov with something approaching severity; he turned very noticeably pale and stared straight into Pastukhov's face. "I even thought that you were not so much upset by the falsity of the statement in the newspaper as by the fact that you are described as a supporter of the Revolution, that your name has been connected with the Revolution."

Alexander Vladimirovich sat for a long time blinking as though he were getting his eyes used to Dorogomilov's stare, then turned his eyes away and looked enquiringly at his wife.

"You see I was right, Asya," he said softly, "I am liable to public ridicule."

Anochka who had been sitting motionless the whole time, bent forward with her elbows on her knees and buried her face in her hands.

"It is even unpleasant to look at such a despicable object as me," continued Pastukhov, barely moving his lips. "There is a youthful conscience over there, that even now cannot stand the sight of me."

"No, no," Anochka interrupted him and sat straight up. "Don't pay any attention to me. It is my own thoughts. . ."

"At home, Anochka . . ." Tsvetukhin began, but she, with an air of severity, would not let him speak.

"I am very sorry that Egor Pavlovich started this strange conversation. He seems to think that he was in the right beyond any shadow of doubt. I don't think we can hold Alexander Vladimirovich responsible for this misunderstanding. That is, if it was a misunderstanding. Was it, Alexander Vladimirovich?" she asked, challengingly serious.

For a second he looked at her in silence, as though he doubted that this slip of a girl could ask such a daring question.

"Yes," he snapped with incisive brutality.

He immediately changed his tone, however, and nudged Egor Pavlovich with his elbow.

"Stern and heavy is the tread of that golden slipper," he said in stage whisper.

"Please understand that I do not condemn you . . ." began Dorogomilov again in his confused manner.

"I didn't want to offend you, either, Alexander," said Tsvetukhin.

"Thank God!" sighed Anastasia Germanovna with relief. "You've melted them all, Anochka. Let us return to this barbaric hogwash that you went into raptures over."

She picked up the bottle with a slightly coquettish and attractive motion of her soft hand.

"Anyway," said Pastukhov, chewing his fish, "it would be silly to take offence. Such *a quid pro quo* could have come your way, Egor. They-married-me-in-my-absence sort of thing. You would also have to prove that you are not a revolutionary.

"I wouldn't think of trying it," exclaimed Tsvetukhin gleefully.

"Why? Are you a Bolshevik?" asked Pastukhov with seeming indifference.

"No. But I am willing to follow the Bolsheviks."

"In your theatre?"

"I haven't got a theatre yet. But I shall have. I am very anxious to discuss my plans with you in particular. You really must join me."

"In what?"

"I have a circle. Call it a studio if you like. Two or three actors, but mostly novices. Some of them took part in school performances but the majority have never seen the footlights. If you only knew how fine they are. Such enthusiasm for work and, most important of all, such faith! We argue a great deal about what the theatre will be like now. The revolutionary theatre, and, first and foremost, of course, our own theatre. If you could only hear them, Alexander."

"I'm hearing," observed Pastukhov laconically.

"Hearing me and what's that! You should listen to my youngsters!"

"Children will be children. But are you a child? I'm interested to know what you really want."

"You know, in the broad sense of the word it is still a search, a dream. We want to take the first steps towards the fulfillment of the dream. We think that first of all we shall have a theatre that can perform under all conditions. A theatre that you can carry in your hands if there is no horse and cart. We want the actors to feel that they are on the stage anywhere on earth."

"On earth or in heaven," added Pastukhov.

"Yes, it will be heaven. Heaven for the actor and the spectator. Yes, for the spectator as well. The spectator will be constantly finding us in unexpected places. When he is at work. In his own home. In the village. In the fields. At fairs. On the town squares. At the front if there is a war on. In his leisure hours if peace reigns. . . ."

Having uttered this last word, Egor Pavlovich stopped. He thrust his outstretched fingers through his wealth of dark hair bringing his heavy cupped hand to rest on the crown of his head. His hair was already deeply tinged with grey and Pastukhov noticed that it had acquired something like a lilac hue.

The moment Egor Pavlovich began talking about the theatre, the awkward self-consciousness which had obviously hampered him, disappeared completely from his speech. His whole bearing became free, he was at his ease and seemed bigger. Anochka watched him admiringly but with an exacting and wilful look which seemed to say: bolder, still bolder! Dorogomilov watched him like a spectator watching the stage from a seat in front of which sits an uncommonly tall man; he craned his neck to one side and threw it back so that his beard served as a sort of protective shield. Anastasia Germanovna opened her red lips. Everybody's attention was fixed on Tsvetukhin. His voice, his speech had pushed Pastukhov aside. The pause seemed to last an eternity.

"In a word," continued Egor Pavlovich as though bewitched and in a sing-song tone, "our art will penetrate into the very life of the spectator and the spectator will merge with our art. He will have his say in art and, in the end, will be the creator of it."

Pastukhov chuckled to himself.

"Save yourself for the future. So far nobody pays to go to your theatre. You had better tell us what you intend to play?"

"We begin with Schiller. You'll see what it's like!"

"'Kabal,' I suppose?"

"Yes."

Pastukhov glanced swiftly at Anochka.

"You, of course, play Louisa?"

She flashed up and asked him in childish astonishment:

"How did you guess?"

"Yes, yes," he shook his head with a smile, "it was very, very hard to guess."

Taking the tip of his thumb between his teeth he squinted at Tsvetukhin.

"It would be still more difficult to guess who will play Ferdinand."

"Yes," said Egor Pavlovich, challengingly. "I am playing Ferdinand."

"You're turned fifty, aren't you? It's time to play elderly roles, old boy."

"You're wrong! He's such a wonderful Ferdinand!" exclaimed Anochka almost indignantly and blushed still more deeply.

"And you wish to do away with the stage as such?"

"If circumstances demand it, yes. That,

however, is not our main purpose. So far we have a curtain and scenery."

"Do you know, my friend, that I can write on birch bark, I can write on stone or in chalk on the side of the stove, but none of these methods will produce a book. No matter what revolution the theatre may accomplish, it will not get away from the stage."

"And in Greece? Or the Middle-Age miracle-plays?"

Pastukhov, however, ignored this exclamation. He spoke still more thoughtfully and it was difficult to know whether he was concentrating his thoughts in order to say something that was important to him, or whether he was bored.

"The idea's not a new one," he suddenly muttered carelessly, "the mobile theatre as projected by the St. Petersburg liberals."

"I want to make my theatre mobile in more than name."

"You want a peregrinating theatre?"

"If that is necessary to make it popular. Like it was in Shakespeare's times."

"Shakespeare didn't play Schiller. A hopeless mix-up, a hopeless mix-up, my friend. . . ."

"At first every new idea seems confusing. When you get down to work, the idea begins to crystallize. One day you jump out of bed with a perfectly clear and ready-made form in your head."

"Ah! The crystallization! Then, of course. . . Inventor! You used to be more sober, however."

"More restrained, not sober. I have now found the wings that I have been seeking all my life."

"I remember your pieces of floating paper. You fly high, aviator. If you break your neck it's your own private affair. But the carrying capacity of your machine is still an unknown quantity. Why do you carry these innocent souls with you in your flight?"

Pastukhov nodded towards Anochka. Intense but fighting against her excitement, she listened, her heavy lids closed, toying with Alyosha's bone fork that had been given to her as the youngest, or dragging her fingers evenly along the tablecloth.

"There is nothing which carries greater responsibility than luring others into art," said Pastukhov in dissatisfied tones. "You drag young men and women in your wake. You yourself know what this road means? You describe it in brilliant and alluring tones. But do you really know what sort of art there will be? What it will turn into under the pressure of your and other fantasies? It may turn out to be a great misfortune for all those you succeed in alluring? I would make the law on the corruption of youth apply to those who lure youth into art, who. . . ."

"The future cannot be built that way," Egor Pavlovich interrupted him. "With such ideas in mind you cannot strive for something better, do you understand that or not?"

"You can't under any circumstances!" Arseni Romanych suddenly said in confirmation and leaned forward as though he intended to rise but immediately fell back to his old position and again became silent.

Anochka looked at Pastukhov.

"Why do you talk about some sort of seduction? I can't foresee the future of art. At the moment I know that it is life. I live. I have freely selected the profession to which I wish to devote myself. If I have strength enough I shall remain at my post and find my place. One may make mistakes anywhere. Last year a friend of mine began training as a dentist. She was taken into the anatomical theatre to watch teeth extracted from corpses. She fainted, didn't go back there again and began to study singing. If I faint on the stage I shall go away and try working in the anatomical theatre. I want to live in my own way. I can assure you that nobody is seducing me."

"Very good," said Alexander Vladimirovich with unexpected gentleness. "Unfortunately things turn out as easily as all that only in formal logic. You've studied logic, haven't you? Art is part of life, I am alive, I am free, therefore . . . and so on. But there is no other sphere in which people are so profoundly unfortunate as they are in art. It does not require a lot: you are ambitious, your ambition is not satisfied and you are unhappy. There is no need to faint."

"My ambition will be satisfied," said Anochka confidently and simply, childishly shaking her head, and then, as though she suddenly remembered where she was, she bowed her head and modestly patted her hair. Everyone

laughed at her comical movements and she herself laughed in her confusion.

"Of course, it will be satisfied," Egor Pavlovich agreed triumphantly. "And you, Alexander, please don't scare Anochka."

"I see that she is not easily scared. But I know the theatre too well to want to hide the truth. Take jealousy, that disease that consumes like slow fire. . . ."

He did not finish the sentence but walked right up to Tsvetukhin.

"Do you know what distinguishes a poor actor from a good one?"

"What?"

"The poor actor envies success, the good actor envies talent."

"How true that is!" grunted Tsvetukhin. "That is a real system! A means by which one may recognize and choose talent without fear of mistake! Isn't it, Anochka? How neatly you say things, you strange and wonderful man!"

Egor Pavlovich pressed Pastukhov's head towards him and in a burst of irrepressible enthusiasm smacked him noisily on the lips.

"I'm certain we shall come to terms! We are both seekers, that's why we exaggerate. There is truth hidden somewhere amongst the exaggerations. I suppose I also exaggerate. Here is my hand—you will be one of us."

"In what role? Pantaloon in red trousers?"

"Don't joke, don't joke! You have to be our first playwright."

"Which of my plays will you put on?"

"You will begin a new play for us."

"So that's it!"

Alexander Vladimirovich again stood up and began pacing back and forth. Relighting his cigarette he smiled softly and began what sounded like a prepared speech.

"Shortly before my departure from St. Petersburg an unknown man persistently tried to see me. At last he broke through the cordon—Asya gave way in face of his insistence. And so a giant with a huge curly yellow beard, like mimosa, rolled into my study. He sat on the sofa and for a solid half hour flooded the room with tasks of the historic moment. I felt that his rhetoric would drown me and I told him that for the moment he was wasting too much time. He did not understand and thundered on. I cried out in anguish—I agree, I agree, but what am I to do? He recovered himself and suddenly demanded that I write a play about the struggle for cleaning back yards, especially the cesspools. He turned out to be a pharmacist and a participant in the Sanitary Education Campaign against the menace of epidemics."

Alexander Vladimirovich waited quietly for the laughs to come. Nobody even smiled, however.

Anastasia Germanovna, with a sort of thoughtful admiration, said:

"A huge beard like mimosa—that's fine!"

"You're rather hasty in comparing me with mimosa," objected Egor Pavlovich. "You don't even know what I want to ask you to write about."

"And did you ask me what I want to write?" said Pastukhov with sudden anger. "And can one write now? Since I came here I haven't been able to write a line! A little while ago you quoted Dostoyevsky to me. Allow me to quote Lomonosov: 'the muses are not wenches that can be raped at any given moment.' He wrote that to his patron."

"And do you want to suggest that I am proposing that you rape your muse?" exclaimed Tsvetukhin, offended.

"When we were coming to you," Anochka put in quickly, "Egor Pavlovich told me what good friends you'd been. Why are you squabbling the whole time?"

She again looked at Pastukhov with a searching and heavy gaze.

"They flare up and then they kiss," laughed Anastasia Germanovna. She took Anochka's fingers in her soft hand. "You're not used to them yet, my dear. Whenever we talk about art we start cursing."

Pastukhov sat in silence. During the last years art discussions had always tired him. He thought that he already understood the nature of art better than anybody else. Disputes about the theatre that had been brought to a head by the Revolution reminded him of the angry debates of amateurs about plays in the open air. Schools and trends of art had long ceased to do anything more than bore him. He was convinced that everything good in art was created despite these trends and, as far as the already proclaimed tendencies were concerned, it was far more important to declare yourself a supporter of them

than to be one; like political parties they collected votes. He did not want to pretend and actually he despised everybody. That was his trend in art. If he was ever drawn into a discussion, he usually ended up by saying that he loved the viable sensation, he loved thought, loved the flesh that is man and therefore considered himself one of the few genuine realists. As his plays were produced, he believed that he was not mistaken. In his heart he had decided once and for all that the era of unreason had come because attempts were being made to introduce reason in places where, as in the dance, it was least of all applicable. He thought that he himself would never change his tastes or his views, and this gave him a proud even if somewhat doleful pleasure.

He might equally well have heard the things Tsvetukhin had just said, in any St. Petersburg circle. They also demanded the creation of nobody knew what. Pastukhov, however, was annoyed at the actor's innocent belief in the novelty of his aspirations. He called this sort of innocence "provincial." At the same time he realized quite well what was happening to Tsvetukhin: when you fall in love even the moon is a new discovery to you.

He leaned back in his creaking armchair, waiting to see what turn the conversation would take. He was too lazy to change the conversation himself.

Arseni Romanych began to speak very thoughtfully.

"That man . . . the one with the beard (he hesitated to say what sort of beard and even covered his own with his hand although it did not in any way resemble mimosa) . . . perhaps he was not very tactful but one cannot help but think about the tasks of the historical moment. . . ."

"I wanted to say just that, Alexander, if you . . . if your future play were to be done in the historical spirit as expressed in our own wonderful days. . . ."

"Historical spirit! Wonderful days!" Pastukhov interrupted him. "You've learned to love high-sounding words, Egor. That simply isn't in the Russian tradition. We have always been noted for our modesty. Where did this disease come from? History! I once read somewhere something about Paris events, in the beginning of the fifteenth century, I think it was. There was a phrase there: 'the Cabochiens joined forces with the Bourguignons but were defeated by the Armagnacs. . . .' I cannot get that phrase out of my head. Is it worth while to take events seriously if in two or three hundred years' time people will say of us that the Cabochiens joined forces, and so on?"

"Only a few minutes ago, on that sofa there, you spoke very differently about history!" said Arseni Romanych. "Can't you hear the sufferings and triumphs of living people behind those words that died God alone knows when? Did you sit reading Solovyov for fun?"

Anochka again joined in the conversation: this time it was not with a naive and accusing seriousness but with something of the excitement of sudden discovery.

"Tell the truth, Alexander Vladimirovich, you're not saying all that because you believe it, but for some other reason, isn't that it?"

"What do you mean by 'all that'?" he asked, blinking angrily at her.

"Please don't get angry. You ridiculed your pharmacist. But you were pleased that he believed so much in your art, that he regarded your word as being of so much importance that all you had to do was to write and the back yards would immediately be cleaned and perhaps people would live in their yards quite differently. And it's true, of course, that your word would have saved many lives . . . people would have ceased to catch infections and die. That is, if you had got down to it and written a play. It's true, isn't it? You know yourself that it's true."

Her eyes shone as though from the excitement of being able to explain everything so simply and easily.

"Poor Sasha, they're picking you to pieces," laughed Anastasia Germanovna.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"You don't seriously believe, my dear young lady, that with the aid of a poem it is possible to raise a bell up on to a belfry? We are speaking of one and the same thing but we think differently."

"And I ask you to tell us what you think of Egor Pavlovich's idea."

"First of all I think that there is no need to treat me as the prisoner at the bar. I do not object to words or even thoughts. Events, however, have heated

your imagination a little too much. I am opposed to the state that you are now in."

"Because it is alien to you, eh?" said Tsvetukhin. "I thought you were younger."

"What has youth to do with it?"

"The Revolution is youth."

"Die and I'll inscribe that statement on your tombstone. Unfortunately youth is innocent of art matters. Incidentally, not completely innocent. Youth interferes with art."

"I don't understand," admitted Anochka. "If youth and revolution are the same (she hesitated) . . . Does the Revolution prevent you from writing?"

"It hinders him from writing against himself," said Tsvetukhin gloomily and then shook his head: "I don't know, I don't know. I feel as though we were walking through a garden in a storm, everything bows before it, the wind whistles and there is a commotion in one's soul, all so excitationable. . . ."

"Oh, hell. There you go again!" exclaimed Pastukhov in hard tones. "It has come out! Excitationable! How I hate that word. Stage slang! A pure invention, non-existent, unsuited to the language . . . idle nonsense and not human speech! . . And your acting, Egor! When I hear those inspired exclamation marks I imagine some strong young he-man twisting and twirling naked in front of me and flexing his biceps!"

He stopped and breathed deeply in order to keep on talking, as though the moment had come for him to make a breach in the wall that stood in his way. Unexpectedly he fell silent.

Anochka, raising slowly, looked fearfully at the slightly opened door.

Pavlik, entering the room, beckoned to his sister with his finger. It was obvious that he had come running as fast as his legs could carry him.

Anochka stepped over the chair like a schoolgirl and ran to him. He pulled her down to him and whispered a few words, all the time panting laboriously.

Arseni Romanych jumped up.

"Something about mamma, eh?" he asked in alarm.

Egor Pavlovich also rose to his feet. He was pale and stared at Anochka with rapidly dilating eyes. She began saying good-bye to everybody.

"My dear, allow me to come with you," asked Tsvetukhin, when she reached him.

"Please don't, there's no need."

She seized Pavlik by the shoulder and they ran out of the room together. The boy shouted back:

"Arseni Romanych, I'll look in later."

Tsvetukhin immediately got ready to go. His hand was trembling when he offered it to Pastukhov.

"Where are you going? Can't you live for a single minute without the golden slipper?"

"Drop it, drop it," Egor Pavlovich spat out. "You can't even imagine what Anochka's mother means to her."

"She's dying," said Arseni Romanych.

"How could I have known . . ." Pastukhov apologized.

He accompanied Tsvetukhin down the corridor and then went into his own room.

Anastasia Germanovna threw open the window. The sky was already crimson in the west but the air was still oppressive. They sat down side by side. Things had changed so rapidly they had to rest in silence for a time to gather their thoughts. After a time Anastasia Germanovna laid her hand on her husband's knee.

"Do you know the legend about Pilate?" she asked softly. "Pontius Pilate, a fat, decrepit old man, lay with his eyes closed on the beach, the sun warming his gouty bones and listened to another aged patrician. Both of them were living in the past. In the distant, glorious and happy past. 'Do you remember,' the other old man asked Pilate, 'when you were Procurator of Judea; do you remember the little red-headed prophet who called himself King of the Jews? I think it was before the insurrection. The scribes demanded his death, you surrendered him and they crucified him in Jerusalem. Do you remember? He was called Jesus. . . 'Pilate turned the other side to the sun, and without opening his eyes answered lazily: 'No, I don't remember. . .!'"

"Why do you tell me this blasphemy?" asked Pastukhov.

"It came into my mind when Tsvetukhin reproached you with having forgotten his friends and you were ashamed to admit that you had really forgotten them. Why were you bound to remember them?"

"So you want to make a Pilate out of me?"

"How can you, darling! What are they to you, anyway? Compared to you? Haven't you every right to forget them?"

She pressed her head to his breast.

"You are big. You are strong. You should think more about your vocation."

He waited for some time and then answered uncertainly:

"No, Asya. I'm very ordinary. Weak. Weaker than the others."

He felt good when he had said that because he had made a frank admission and because she had called him strong and he knew that she would immediately deny what he had said and kiss him.

And she did deny it.

"No, you are strong!" and she parted her lips for him to kiss.

A minute later he again spoke but not very confidently.

"Nevertheless, I think we must move from here, Asya."

"We don't have to move, my dear. We have to run," she said in scarcely audible tones and looked passionately and despairingly into his eyes.

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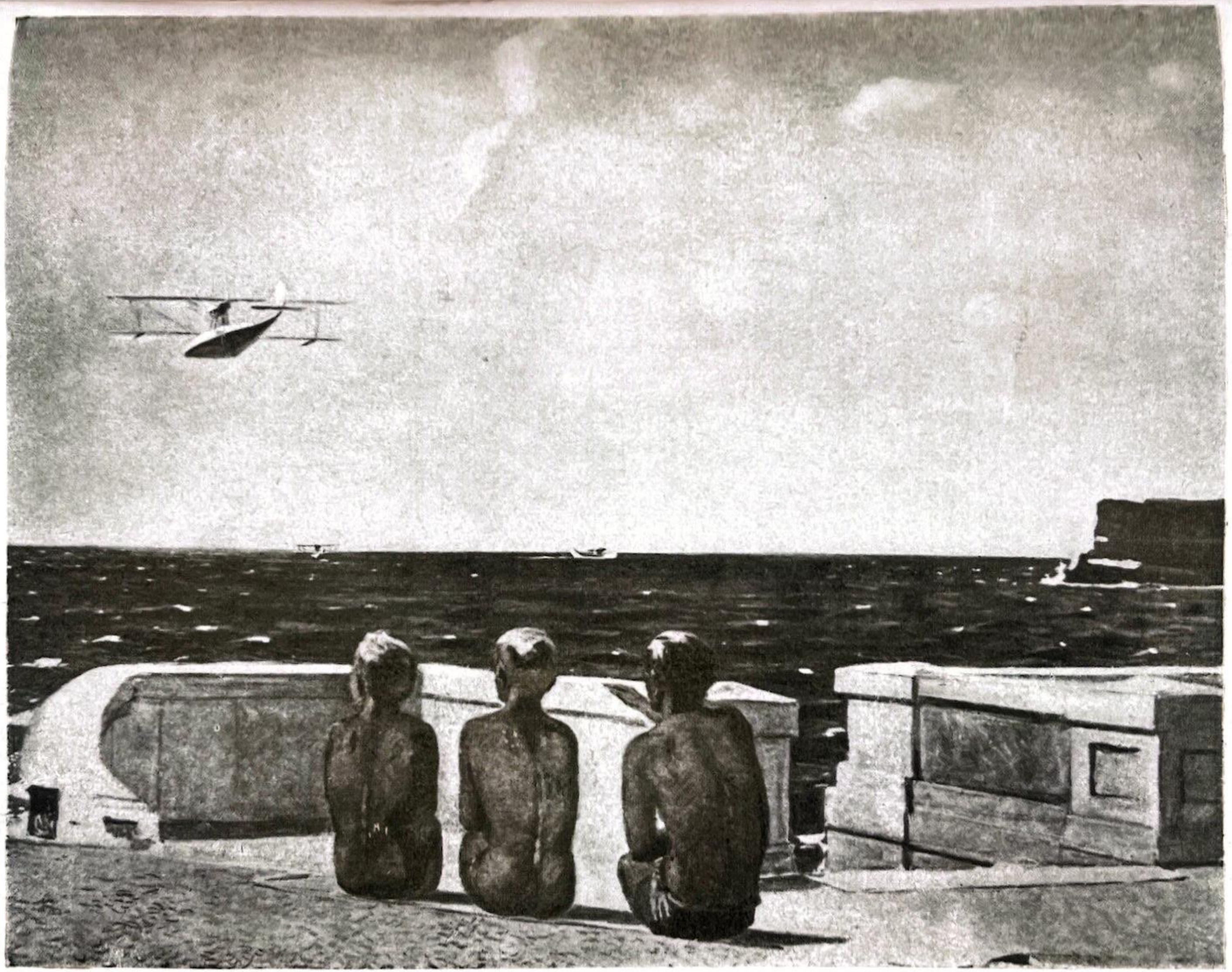
Olga Ivanovna was dying.

She had been dying for a long time. It was late at night and Anochka lay across her bed with her feet on the floor, her hands behind her head pressed close against the wall, her face towards the ceiling. Her eyes were closed. Her father and Pavlik were in the adjoining room at the dying woman's bedside.

Anochka could hear the infrequent hoarse breathing of her mother that came from somewhere deep down below, seemingly from under the ground: it was not like human respiration at all, it was impossible that Olga Ivanovna, that mamma was making those noises. The cuckoo clock announced the hour of three with its usual haste, and then went on its usual way, the ticks sounding like the crackle of sunflower seeds between teeth, marking the swing of the pendulum. Her ears seemed incapable of absorbing anything else. Anochka was sure that she was awake all the time and that her body was immobile not because of sleepiness or weakness but because of a conscious dislike for watching the sufferings of her mother. All the time she lay there she had been visited by something like short dreams, interrupted by periods of wakefulness. She saw her father, then unexpectedly saw some of her acquaintances, sometimes she saw herself, but most of the time, almost all the time, in fact, she saw and sensed the presence of her mother through other people, as through a sparse foliage.

Little, fussy Olga Ivanovna, aged before her time, ran slightly bent through the streets, carrying a dress in a bundle to be delivered to a customer. Or she was pressing her way through the crowd in the marketplace to get to a cart loaded with cabbage and, having selected a head, she took it in her arms and pressed it to make sure it had a solid heart and that she was not wasting a single kopek. Or she was busy at home over the table in the corner, cutting out clothing and then pushing the material under the flashing needle of her sewing machine with her thin fingers. How many times had this running and fussing and the toil of the tireless hands of the indefatigable woman pulled the family out of the abyss into which they had been accidentally pushed by the head of the family—Tikhon Parabukin—and his insatiable love of wine. It was not he, of course, but Olga Ivanovna who was the real head of the house; she thought herself responsible for her children and for her husband who at times had greater need of her than any small child. She brought up Anochka and she brought up Pavlik despite all her misfortunes, brought them up with a dogged determination that took its strength from her one passionate idea—to free the children from that bitterness which she herself had drunk to the dregs. Izvekova helped her with Anochka's education. Vera Nikandrovna taught her the rudiments, got her into the *gymnasium*, applied for and obtained a grant from the Impoverished Students Aid Society and in general held out a firm helping hand whenever it was necessary, even presenting Olga Ivanovna with a sewing machine for which the woman blessed her every night and morning. The family, however, was not maintained by outside charity but by the mother who strained herself to the utmost in doing it. Parabukin had on many occasions shown a burst of enthusiasm to support the toil of his wife; he would bring home



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his first earnings in triumph but soon began to spend more than he earned. He also loved the children, especially Anochka, but he loved them with a sense of guilt, while Olga Ivanovna loved them self-abnegatingly and did not for a moment doubt that her love would triumph and bear fruit.

In Anochka's sleepy brain this past was not expressed by thoughts but by a series of sharply defined visions and the strange thing was that it had all become a matter of the past from the moment when she had seen death in her mother's prominent round eyes. She lay on the bed as though she were chained to it, she felt her arms and legs were swelling and in the semi-dormant interludes she repeated over and over again in her mind that the death of her mother would not simply mean one person less in the family but would mean the end of the family, the end of the home.

It seemed to her that every one of the sounds within the room had changed. The clock still ticked away. Apart from its crunching tick, however, Anochka could hear nothing. With a fleeting movement she shifted her body on to her elbows and shivered from the tingling sensation caused by the flow of blood in her fingers and knees. The prolonged, heavy hoarseness of her mother's breathing seemed to have drowned all other sounds. Then a prolonged silence. Then it came again; the sound filled the room and died away.

And so that was the end? How could it have happened and did it always happen that way? Quite recently, even the day before, when the doctor had said that the danger was great, Anochka had believed that her mother would not die. That morning it had seemed that Olga Ivanovna was better and one could have been sure that the crisis marked the end of the disease and did not mean death. The first illness had passed—the typhus that had frightened them all, when Olga Ivanovna had been so weak and so delicate that Anochka had carried her in her arms like a child. Olga Ivanovna began to get better: she got up from her bed and even took up her needle again. Why then, now, should some unfortunate inflammation of her lungs end in death? No, it was just a crisis, the end of a crisis, its highest point. Olga Ivanovna would pass over this peak and would breathe more deeply, breathe and. . . .

Why was she not breathing? No, there it was again! Again that crepitation, more ghostly, more unnatural than before. Surely there could not be such a rattling, such a roar in a human breast, in the narrow, pitiful breast of her mother? And then silence. No. There it was again. No, she had imagined that. Could that be all? Could that have been the last gasp? No, it was impossible! If Anochka had known that it was the last, she would have listened differently, quite differently. . . .

Why was there no more breathing? It would come again. Perhaps it had been the last; there had been a lengthy silence and the whole house was waiting. There it was. There, it had begun, begun. It began quite unexpectedly, quite different, in short, sharp gasps. What was that?

"What's that?" asked Anochka in a trembling voice and in an instant she seemed to awaken, and realized that instead of her mother's laboured breathing, increasingly short and clear gasps of despair were coming to her through the open door. It was her father sobbing and striking dully on the iron of the bedstead.

"What's that?" cried Anochka.

She wanted to get up but she was held back by a heaviness she had never known before in her free and obedient body. She lay motionless.

Pavlik came running dishevelled out of the other room, moved the table over to the clock, climbed up and stopped the pendulum.

"What's that for?" asked Anochka sitting up on the bed.

Pavlik did not answer and she saw only his golden, burning and seemingly accusing eyes: he probably could not find words to explain that clocks were always stopped when somebody died in the house—he had read that in a certain strange and wonderful book.

It was growing light but things still seemed to merge into each other when Anochka went fearfully into her mother's room. Her father—tall and gaunt, wearing a black linen jacket that was too short for him—stood beside the bed bent over like an inverted L, his arms resting on the footrail of the bed. He was racked with sobs, his head beating against his arms.

The mother had a new look about her—Anochka did not recognize her and turned away in fear. Looking for support she shrank back to the wall almost in the corner of the room; she felt that she would burst out crying, raised her hands to her eyes, knocking against a shelf as she did so: a papier-mâché vase decorated with faded coloured flowers, the only ornament in the room, went tumbling to the floor.

This sound, resembling a thumbnail striking against cardboard, seemed to arouse the father; he stood up, spasmodically seized the sheet and pulled it off the dead woman. He fell on his knees and with groans began noisily and rapidly kissing Olga Ivanovna's thin legs.

Anochka picked the vase up from the floor and carefully replaced it; she ran back to her own room and buried her face in her pillow.

The next two days passed in a strange coming and going of many people—neighbours and acquaintances came, went and came again bringing advice and comfort. Olga Ivanovna had never got in anybody's way before, but now that she was laid out on the table she occupied a lot of room and the apartment seemed still smaller. Anochka spoke to everybody who came and then forgot who had called and asked why somebody to whom she had just been talking had not been to see them.

Mefodi Silych, Parabukin's bottle companion, came more often than anybody. He considered it his duty to bolster up the despondent spirits of the widower for which purpose the two of them disappeared into the shed or behind the old decrepit acacia in the yard, where they hurriedly emptied the bottle the comforter had brought with him.

Tsvetukhin called. He placed a bunch of lilac at the feet of Olga Ivanovna. For a moment the flowers filled the apartment with an overpowering perfume and this odour brought the hopelessly exhausting sensation of a corpse into the house with it. Egor Pavlovich insisted on Anochka's taking a walk through the streets with him. She agreed but had no sooner passed the gates and listened to his distracting talk before she regretted her decision and ran back.

Vera Nikandrovna also called. She brought a silk kerchief embroidered in satin stitch with which they covered the dead woman's head and placed her hands on the fringed border. Olga Ivanovna's face was so snow-white in this beautiful coloured frame that Anochka could not stand it and, like a child hiding from something fearful, sat down on the floor and pressed her face close against Vera Nikandrovna's knees; for a long time Vera Nikandrovna stood soothingly stroking the girl's cropped head.

Pavlik proved more active than anybody else. His nimble legs were of the greatest help in this hour of grief and worry. He found out the necessary addresses, took his father to the undertaker, went to the cemetery. He saw that he had grown important in the house and his pride increased after he had been to Meshkov's with the intention of sharing his sorrow with Vitya. Elizaveta Merkurievna who was ill herself was sorely troubled and even thought of going to bid farewell to Olga Ivanovna; she was, however, persuaded to stay. She asked for the details of how Olga Ivanovna had died and told Pavlik to run home immediately and find out whether any money was needed.

A family council was held in which Pavlik took part as the equal of his father and sister. Parabukin said that he wanted no doles from the Meshkovs.

"Your late mother suffered enough from that Merkuri when she was alive. Have you forgotten how he drove you out into the frost when you were small? We shall get a grant for the funeral and we'll manage on that. In the meantime get a loan from Izvekova."

"Vera Nikandrovna has given me some money but I doubt if it will be enough."

"Then ask your actor, he won't refuse. Only a loan, of course," said the father.

Anochka turned gloomy and did not answer. He sank heavily on to Olga Ivanovna's empty bed, his eyes were filled with tears and, as had been frequently the case during the past days, he began to sob. Anochka looked at the ground and said bitterly:

"That's from vodka, father. . . ."

"All right, it's from vodka," he sighed humbly. "But surely it doesn't all come from vodka? Surely you don't think there's nothing left in me but vodka? You condemn me. Although you're clever, you're not observant enough. There hasn't been any vodka for a long time.

It's like a mixture of petrol from a truck."

Pavlik interrupted his father.

"If you don't want to borrow money from Vitya's mother I'll ask Arseni Romanych. He'll lend us some."

"That's right, sonny; he'll give us some, he's a good man."

"We'll ask if we find there isn't enough. Only if there isn't enough," decided Anochka.

Gradually everything was arranged. As is usually the case when somebody dies. At first the nearest relatives think that sorrow has robbed them of all will power and that they are helpless to overcome the obstacles that suddenly confront them. Then everything seems to get done of its own accord and, in a way independently of the will of those who are left, the dead are carried off to that place where everybody finishes his journey, without any further hindrance.

It was not until the morning of the third day that the heavy coffin of raw deal, smelling strongly of pitch, was brought to the house. Vitya Shubnikov was watching from round the corner when they placed the corpse in the coffin and lifted it up on to the table.

"Come and help," Pavlik called to Vitya, and Vitya, forcing himself to abandon his secure corner, ran to the feet of Olga Ivanovna, pushed his hands under the bottom of the coffin and lifted with all his might. He immediately felt his fingers stick to the unplaned boards of the coffin and when he let go he spent a long time wiping the pitch from his fingers in fright; the more he rubbed the stronger the turpentine smell of the coffin became.

Unexpectedly many people came to see the corpse brought out but almost all of them remained at the gate and only a small circle of friends followed the body to the cemetery. They had hired a hearse.

"Everything is very respectable," Parabukin muttered to himself as they set off. "Olga Ivanovna would have been pleased. Thank you, thank you, Tisha, she would have said."

Just then he remembered that for the sake of economy the gravediggers had been engaged only to dig the grave and that they would have to bury the corpse themselves. He needed a spade and a hammer. The procession halted at the corner of the street while Pavlik and Vitya ran back to borrow the necessary tools from the neighbours.

There was no wind, the air was oppressive, the town seemed to have settled down to the hot weather, and every inch of it seemed to feel the fiery inferno of the whitish-blue sky. The procession stood in silence behind the hearse. The driver of the hearse, dressed in a dirty cream-coloured dust coat was angrily waving his hands to drive the gadflies away from the horse that was throwing its head up and down in torment.

A car appeared on the side street. It came up the hill at full speed, reached the crossroads and stopped. The procession would either have to move out of the car's way or it would have to drive on to the pavement. But a man rose up slightly in the open car and, with apparent indecision, bared his dark head. Then he opened the door, jumped out into the road, and hurried towards the hearse.

Anochka recognized Kirill. He walked straight up to her, pressed her outstretched hand firmly and spoke to her quickly and softly.

"I wanted to accompany your mother to the grave, but it's impossible: I have some very urgent business. Please excuse me."

She released her hand from his hot fingers.

"Thank you."

She did not look at him but noticed that he was the centre of attention. Vera Nikandrovna's look showed her approval. Dorogomilov, who stood some way off, was watching Kirill with fixed attention: he remembered him as a boy and had not seen him since. Parabukin apparently did not know who this man was who had come in a car. He was worried—why were Pavlik and Vitya so long in returning. Tsvetukhin exchanged greetings with Kirill as with a close acquaintance. He wanted to ask him about an appointment on a very important matter but Izvekov answered his greeting so casually that Egor Pavlovich was somewhat confused. After some hesitation he called Mefodi Silych to one side to ask him whether this was a suitable occasion to talk business.

"Why not?" Mefodi shrugged his shoulders and declaimed: "Sleep, oh dead, in thy coffin, enjoy life, thou living!"

Tsvetukhin, however, was too late:

the boys came running back with the spade and hammer and the hearse moved on.

Kirill said good-bye to Anochka.

"If you need any help, tell mamma and she will let me know. Please do, I beg you," he added moving awkwardly towards her. as though he were afraid they would be overheard.

She bowed her head.

Kirill walked a few quiet steps with her and then turned back swiftly to the car. He ordered the chauffeur to drive right up to the corner and stopped there. He stood up bareheaded in the car, his knees pressed against the seats and watched the departing procession. Suddenly he noticed Anochka, who for a moment turned round,. and in the bright sunshine caught her distant glance. He watched for another second and then ordered the chauffeur to drive on.

"Hurry," he said, "I'm late."

He took out his watch and held it before his eyes in a hand that shook from the movement of the car and he either did not see or did not realize what the time was.

Parabukin fussed around the open grave in the cemetery. He went up to each one in turn to ask them something but only looked into their faces and turned away again. Mefodi caught him by the elbow.

"What's the matter?"

"She was religious," whispered Parabukin.

"You want a service, do you?" asked Mefodi so that everybody could hear him.

"Vanity, vanity," said Parabukin, as though he did not know what was happening, "but it's her due, eh?"

He looked shyly at his daughter. Anochka consulted Vera Nikandrovna; they decided not to contradict father.

He disappeared amongst the crosses and a minute later came back with a gaunt priest in cap and robes. They took the lid off the coffin and stood closer to it. Waving his empty censer the priest began to chant the litany for the dead. He had a high-pitched voice which seemed to send its strains upwards. The twittering of the birds amongst the huge leaves of the Californian maple that spread from beyond the cemetery fence became more audible and the bells on the censer jangled on the same note as that of the birds.

Dorogomilov remained standing between Pavlik and Vitya. His shaggy head was turned towards the sky which here seemed to have receded to an unusual distance. Mefodi was deeply touched and at the close of the litany "We pour out prayer to the Lord" he joined the singing in a broken low bass.

When the time for the last farewells came, the priest, looking at the embroidered kerchief, asked sadly and regretfully:

"Does the kerchief go with her?"

"Yes," answered Anochka immediately and stood in front of the priest to keep him away from the coffin.

"Everything goes with her, everything," muttered Parabukin.

In a burst of zealous haste that had suddenly come upon him he covered his wife's face with the corner of the kerchief.

This was the last Anochka saw of her mother. She looked inexplicably happy and pure at that moment, and drew Anochka towards her with terrible power. Anochka suddenly dropped to her knees on the ground beside the coffin, threw back the kerchief and pressed herself against her mother's hands. The hands were already soft and not very cold, warmed by the sun. She kissed the hand that lay on top; Anochka lifted the fingers and with her lips felt the inner surface of the tips, needle-pricked as though they were still alive. She felt so clearly the recent caress of those work-roughened fingers on her face; it was as though the caress still lingered in these fingers and she was unable to tear herself away from them; she kissed them again and again, pouring her tears on them.

They tried to lift her up. Tsvetukhin bent down to her but she herself suddenly stood up and with an unexpected effort stepped back from the coffin and wiped her face, haggard and tormented with pain.

One of the old women who hung around the graveyard pushed herself nimbly forward.

"Is she your sister?"she asked Anochka, and learning that it was her mother, she wailed: "Oh, she is more beautiful than a bride standing under the crown! Pure as a dove, may the kingdom of heaven be hers! . . ."

Parabukin covered the coffin with the lid and hurriedly began hammering

the nails in very thoroughly. The banging of the hammer called forth a lighter clatter, a seemingly frolicsome echo amongst the crosses. The single gravedigger who stood disconsolately some distance away, threw a coil of rope onto the ground. They unwound the rope, passed the ends under the coffin and lifted it onto the heap of loose clay that had been dug out of the grave.

Suddenly Mefodi Silych ordered in a loud voice, as though directing a gang of workers.

"Turn it round! Turn it round!"

"Why turn it?" asked Parabukin helplessly.

"There'll be a cross, won't there? Turn the feet to the cross!"

"The cross goes at the head!"

"Who are you teaching? On resurrection day the dead will rise from their graves with their faces to the cross and to the East. Understand? Turn the feet round to the cross."

Parabukin, however, objected. They argued noisily and Mefodi looked round for the priest but he had already gone; his glance fell on the gravedigger.

"Why don't you say something?"

"Turn her," said the gravedigger grudgingly, knowing that his words were valuable but that nobody would pay him anything extra for them.

When they had lowered the coffin Parabukin, without waiting until the mourners had each thrown a handful of earth into the grave, seized the spade from Pavlik and began so zealously shovelling the lumps of clay from the mound that he raised a cloud of reddish dust. He worked furiously. His pendant cheeks soon turned pale, his head of scanty curls scintillated and showed grey in the sunlight, the sweat poured from his forehead onto the ground.

"Give it here, give it to me," said Mefodi trying to seize the spade.

Parabukin did not give it up, his hands gripped it like those of a man in convulsions, he continued shovelling in the earth, his movements growing faster as though he were competing with somebody. At last he began waving the empty spade, hardly ever picking up earth on it and staggering from exhaustion.

Then Anochka went up to him, pulled his fingers from the spade and led him away: he dropped to the ground with his back against the mound of a grave. He was breathing in short gasps and from the linen jacket that had stuck to his perspiring body she could see how his heart was palpitating, his dangling hands and his huge feet thrown out wide apart were evidence of his impotence. He began to speak, the whistling of his breath interrupting the words:

"Olga Ivanovna . . . our dearest . . . with our own hands. . . ."

Anochka did not leave him. Looking through the foliage of the motionless maple tree she watched the people change places and work at the grave, and for some reason she imagined that she was looking at them through a reducing glass and that everything was taking place far, far away. Egor Pavlovich took the spade from Pavlik. Then Arseni Romanych took his place, his long tumbling hair dangling over his face. All together they took the cross and put the end into the grave. The cross was too short now. Again they began shovelling in the clay. Mefodi Silych's head bent forward and then arose again and his squashed nose seemed uglier than ever. The grave was now level with the ground and they began piling up the mound. The mound grew up sort of spontaneously, irregular from one edge to the other. The birds began to fuss in the trees and the leaves moved so that now they hid the grave from Anochka and then revealed it. The men still kept shovelling the clay, but underneath it was still damp and the dust settled, leaving the air clearer.

Parabukin had by now regained his breath and stood up.

"I'm going."

Anochka thought of detaining him but he said:

"I don't want to see it. Later."

She did not notice that Mefodi Silych disappeared together with him.

Egor Pavlovich laid the wilting lilacs on the grave. The drooping flowers still gave off the odour of the coffin.

Then they all moved in silence towards the gates.

At the tram stop Pavlik told his sister that he was going on the Volga with Vitya. She told him that he must go home. He then said he would go to Arseni Romanych. No, he must go home. Then he would go to Vitya's. No, home, repeated his sister. He frowned. It was

hard for him to disobey his sister. She was the first to teach him to read and at home her word had often decided something of importance. Perhaps she now thought of taking the home into her own hands? Hardly. She would no doubt begin setting up a theatre with her Egor Pavlovich. She'd have no time for the house.

"What is there to do at home now?" asked Pavlik.

"The same as you did before, only it must be done better," answered the sister.

"I shan't do anything. You don't know life," he answered angrily.

Anochka smiled faintly at him.

The tram dragged along. Their friends left one by one at the various stops, some of them slapped Pavlik on the back, some shook hands with him, others pressed him close to themselves and stroked his head. Egor Pavlovich chucked him under the chin. Vera Nikandrovna kissed him on the cheek.

"That's about the limit," thought Pavlik.

As they passed through their courtyard Anochka saw Mefodi Silych and her father behind the acacia. They sat with their heads bent towards each other and were probably philosophizing as usual. She decided not to disturb them.

The apartment had to be cleared up. The tiny rooms had become spacious and for the first time in her life they contained what seemed to be surplus things. A new place had to be found for them. At the same time it was unthinkable that they should change their places. It was impossible to imagine mother's bed being taken away somewhere. Or that the chair on which mother had worked at the sewing machine could be moved.

The most insignificant circumstances become noteworthy when they are accompanied by death. Anochka tried to occupy herself with work but kept stopping. Memories made her helpless. Suddenly she found herself holding a piece of material with red polka dots; it was one of the countless pieces left over after cutting out something; she stood motionless looking out of the window without letting the rag fall from her hands. Once when her mother had pricked her thumb with a needle she had bound it with a piece of material with red polka dots like this one. That thumb had given Olga Ivanovna a lot of trouble. On which hand had it been? On the right? No, the left. It hurt mamma to hold the material under the machine needle when she was sewing. Anochka could not bring herself to throw away that piece of rag and placed it in one of her books. Then she looked at a photograph, rosy ash-coloured from age, a photograph that she remembered from childhood and that had always been the cause of wonder. Mamma was sitting in an armchair. She was wearing a full, bell-shaped dress down to the floor and on her lap she held a little girl with bare bandy legs. That had been Anochka's dead sister. Her father was wearing a short frock coat and bell-bottomed trousers.

He was a railway inspector at the time. Anochka did not know him like this, she always remembered her father as a stevedore in a hempen shirt or a linen shirt or a linen jacket, the latter of more recent date since he had begun to look for lighter work. Instead of eyes, he, mamma and the girl had dots, that looked as though they had been really picked out with a pin.

She noticed, at last, that the usual crunching tick of the clock was missing and lifted her head to look at it. The clock was still. The hands were almost together at seventeen minutes past three.

"Pavlik, can we start the clock?" she asked uncertainly.

He had not expected the question and could not find an answer. He had only read that clocks were stopped in a house when a person died. When they had to be started again was something he has not read. Perhaps they were stopped for ever? A person dies for ever, doesn't he?

"It doesn't matter, we'll never forget that time," said Anochka looking at the clock.

Still Pavlik did not answer.

"Go and find out what time it is," she ordered.

He ran to the neighbours. When he was gone she started the pendulum swinging.

Still she was incapable of deciding everything herself. She went out to her father.

Parabukin sat on a board that had been nailed to an old tree stump. Mefodi Silych was walking up and down near him. Apparently they had been quarrelling. They were in the habit of worrying

each other with puzzling problems but they never quarrelled and apparently could not live without each other. A few years before they had met at the same level, Mefodi going down and Parabukin a little way up: the former was being more frequently discharged from the theatre for drunkenness, and the latter, after an illness, had begun to drink less and had tried his fortune at various jobs. Since then they had remained stuck, each with his own failings. During recent months, however, Tikhon Platonovich had been working and in this way differed from his friend.

He moved to one side and offered his daughter a seat.

Anochka, however, refused.

"I only wanted to ask you a question: suppose we give mamma's bed to Pavlik? He's outgrown his."

"I've been thinking the same. Do you want me to help you?"

"No, Pavlik and I will do it," she said as she went away.

He shook his head after her.

"Just like her mother, like Olga Ivanovna. Delicate but very high strung. Although she also has something of me in her: wants everything her own way. Dangerous blood."

"Bad, if she takes after you," said Mefodi. "She will no sooner get one thing than drop it and run after another. But it's her pride that won't let her. See how she kept the priest away from her mother! Death, brother, is a great insult to man. It is an insult that a litany will not cure."

"Are you blaming me for the service? And you sang the same tune as the priest!"

"That was my memories and not me. It was a relic within me that sang," Mefodi excused himself.

"You forgive yourself but not me? Why did I send for the priest? I had to make my peace with my dead wife. With her memory."

"Afraid of God?"

"Why this idle chatter!" said Parabukin sadly. Haven't we discussed everything together? Don't you know my secret dream?"

"And that's also a kind of God, the dream!" said Mefodi joyfully and sat down on the end of the board. "A dream is something you can't catch up with. If you do catch up with it, it is no longer a dream. The same with God: as long as you don't see him, he's God. Once you see him he's an idol, a piece of stone."

"You yourself said that a man can't live without dreams," said the offended Parabukin.

"I said so. He can't. But a dream cannot be brought down to earth. As soon as you begin to turn it into a thing, into something tangible, lo and behold, you have an idol in your hand. Understand?"

"You're an idol yourself."

"True! The material nomen, as the philosophers say, the materialized dream.

"To hell with your nomen! Everything good in man is a dream. Your very words. Did you say them? You did. So that if the dream is God, then I must be God. I can do anything. If I want to build a useful world, please, here it is. Also your words. Did you say them? You did. And don't bother me. Philosopher! I have children and I am guilty before them. I have pity for them. I cannot help but believe."

Parabukin got up, seized the trunk of the acacia in his fist and shook it, bringing the yellow petals of the flowers down from the tree. Mefodi blinked up at him enquiringly:

"If you are God then arrange for Olga Ivanovna's funeral meets. In Russian style. Materially!"

Parabukin shivered as though from cold and then asked suddenly and in humble tones:

"Are you my friend? Then comfort me. I'm weeping inside me."

"All right, wait for me!"

Mefodi Silych went away determinedly and Parabukin, left alone, again sat down and covered his face with his hands.

Mefodi was his tutor in life, whose seminary knowledge and that poisonous doubt, which like sulphuric acid will eat away even a stone, placed him above Parabukin. Parabukin himself thought that the world was arranged in a very practical way, so practical that not everybody was clever enough to pick it to pieces. People like himself, he thought, had been deprived by fate of an opportunity of showing themselves cleverer than the established mechanism of life. They had short springs in them. People with long springs in them never lagged behind the passage of days. Parabukin had a very short spring: he had no sooner mustered sufficient energy to reach out for his fortune than the spring ran down. In the events that had occurred

since the Revolution he thought he saw a simplification of the mechanism of life, so that a short spring would be enough to enable him to take what he needed from the world. He did not bother about reforming himself; he believed that without any changes on his part he would fit in with the changed world. He imagined that it was for people like him that the general change had been undertaken. He was not a man without a conscience. On the contrary, his conscience often bothered him.

No sooner had Mefodi gone away, therefore, than he stopped philosophizing and began to think soberly about the position he was in. With Olga Ivanovna's death his spring had become still shorter. If Tikhon Platonovich were now without work there would be literally nothing to fill his belly. He had been on Olga Ivanovna's hands but now he had two children on his hands. True, Anochka, had finished school, she should now begin to think about the family. But what about Pavlik? If he were only twelve years old he would be able to say that he was fifteen and then in a pinch could have got him a job, even in the Salvage Department where he worked himself. There was, for example, a warehouse full of ownerless and confiscated libraries. Boys sat there and tore up books that had been scrapped. The covers went for shoemaking, clean pages were used as office paper and the printed pages for wrapping. Easy enough work and before you could look round the boy would come home with a worker's rations. And on his wages alone would Tikhon Platonovich be able to feed him?

Common sense brought sorrow to Parabukin and yearning gnawed into his very heart.

He waited impatiently for Mefodi. When he came Parabukin saw his tired and guilty face and could not refrain from groaning: his faithful friend had returned empty-handed.

"Now you wait for me," said Parabukin, recovering from the blow, and walked rapidly to the house with the yard-long steps of his huge, thin legs.

Anochka had by this time got hold of herself and had already done a lot. A light golden dust shone in the windows through which the sun was streaming. Pavlik was using a knife to scrape inkstains off the inkstand. The scraping of the knife was accompanied by the rustle of a broom in the other room. A folded bedstead stood in the doorway leaning against the jamb. Beds that had been pulled apart lay on all sides.

"I'll help you, girlie," said Parabukin.

"All right. Take the blankets outside and hang them up. Pavlik knows where the clothesline is. Not too far from the window so that we can see them."

The father went out to put up the rope. He tied one end to the carved window frame and the other to a lamppost in the yard that had long been disused, testing it thoroughly to see whether it would hold and then, with his son, began to carry out blankets. Shortly, however, he came back, remained in the room, picked over bits of rag, began to invent reasons for sending Pavlik out to hang up one blanket and fetch another in.

Suddenly Pavlik tapped at the window and shouted to his sister from the yard.

"Look, papa's taking something away!"

Anochka ran out and saw her father as soon as she reached the door. He was walking swiftly towards the yard gates and was carrying an awkward bundle wrapped in mamma's chequered autumn blouse under his arm, pressed close to his side. He was halfway across the yard when he heard them giving chase to him. He ran heavily, his feet wide apart.

Anochka, however, overtook him, dashing to the gates at a swift and almost soundless run, slammed the wicket and stood with her back to it, blocking his way.

She jerked back the corner of the blouse that covered her father's booty. It was the sewing machine, under its wooden cover. Anochka pulled at the handle of the cover.

"All right, all right, that's enough," said her father softly.

She still pulled the machine stubbornly towards her. Drawing back from her he muttered through lips that trembled in a nervous smile:

"What are you afraid of? D'you think I'm your enemy?"

Pavlik was already standing beside them, looking up at his father with tears in his eyes that shone light yellow in the sunlight.

"I just want it for a time, in place of a deposit. I won't sell it—in memory of mamma," said Parabukin in a wailing voice.

Anochka still did not speak but seized the cover of the machine with both hands. At last she opened her badly bitten lips.

"Pavlik, take hold of father's hand."

"All right, I'll take it back mysel.. He's small, he'll drop it," said Parabukin, apparently reconciled.

With a nimble and rapid effort she pressed angrily on the machine from below and pulled it away from him, scarcely able to hold it in her thin hands.

"Take it home," she said to her brother and he carried the machine away leaning well over to one side and waving his free hand, held far out from his body, in time with his short, swift steps; he carried the machine like a pail overfilled with water.

Anochka picked the blouse up from the ground and shook it out without looking at her father.

"What do you want?" asked Parabukin in a venomous and insulted voice. "D'you want to reform me? Your mother couldn't do it!"

"I'll try," she said shortly.

The colour left her face. She walked back across the yard slowly and easily. Mefodi Silych, sitting perfectly motionless on his heels behind the acacia bush, watched her every movement.

(To be continued)

Translated by George Hanna

BOOKS AND WRITERS

NINA EMELYANOVA

The figure of the "non-professional" turned writer, of men and women who take up the pen after travelling along other roads of endeavour, is nothing new in world literature. What is new in the Soviet literary field is the wide opportunities that lie open to all those who display ability in telling the Soviet reader of their life experiences, to those who have something to say that will acquaint the reader with various branches of art, science or craftsmanship in which they have laboured. Those "non-professional" writers often have a freshness all their own, a fund of unconventional but absorbing subject matter, but they do not always possess a command of the craft of literature; in this respect the Soviet "non-professional" enjoys tangible advantage over his colleagues abroad —the advice and assistance willingly given by writers of recognized standing, regular consultations provided by publishing houses and their editorial staffs, and special discussions arranged by the Union of Soviet Writers and its local branches.

Typical of such Soviet authors is Nina Emelyanova who has already made a name for herself. She began as a geologist after graduating from the University of Moscow in 1917. There were a number of breaks in her work as a geologist; she was in the medical service during the Civil War, later serving in the army, then to become a schoolteacher. In 1923 she returned to Moscow to finish her diploma thesis, and then settled in Siberia where she worked as a geologist, taking part in a number of geological expeditions to the north and south Yenisei, to the *taiga*, and to the Far-Eastern Maritime Province.

In 1939, Nina Emelyanova published her first book *In the Ussurian Taiga* with the modest sub-heading *Notes of a Geologist*. Properly speaking, the book has no plot. The author simply sets out to describe the Far-Eastern taiga, her arrival at a Mountain and Taiga Research Station, the people she met there, and the ups and downs in her own work and theirs.

The story is marked by a leisurely pace, and a wealth of detail. It was over 60 years ago that the first settlers came to the Ussuri territory in bullock carts with their families, their herds and their household chattels. The road to the promised land took about three years, and they traversed many thousands of miles to reach a territory where there was plenty of room for all, and the soil of which was to be theirs forever. The best lands went to the pioneers, who used the taiga only as hunting grounds. The latecomers found all the best land already occupied, and they were obliged to burn down the taiga in order to clear it for cultivation. The soil, however, yielded but poor harvests since it was unsuited to husbandry; meanwhile the natural wealth of the taiga was being destroyed by man's efforts to bring it under crops.

Things changed after the October Revolution, and the wanton wastage of the soil came to an end with a new approach by man to nature. A sign of the times was the opening of special research stations in the taiga region.

"The purpose of the Mountain and Taiga Research Station, the prospecting of the slopes of the mountains," writes Emelyanova, "concerns me both as a geologist and as a citizen to whose lot it has fallen to live in a country where man has begun rationally to control the forces of nature. The difference between this new control of nature and the work of the old settlers is that nowadays man has begun to look at his land from above, as it were. This makes it easier for him to change the face of the earth, following and elaborating nature's own scheme of things, not for the good of individuals but for the benefit of the many.

"From my favourite vantage point I can see the new changes taking place on the face of the earth in our territory; as the farmer knows all about the soil and moisture in his field so will man come to understand life in this taiga of the mountain slopes and, according to the peculiarities of the soil, the steepness of the slope, the moisture, he will either leave it as taiga land, or plant it to orchards, to some new and as yet unknown crop. And then, the station's reservation will not be the best part of the taiga, to be compared with the man-spoiled forest, but on the contrary beautiful forests will be compared with it and people will say: 'Look at the poor sort of forest they used to preserve!'"

Emelyanova's presentation of the poetry of nature is full of a profound understanding of the true significance of nature in the life of man; this understanding arises from scientific knowledge, and a realization of man's creative work in changing the face of the earth.

The author's attitude to the people she describes is determined by the way they regard their duties. Particularly pleasing is the young botanist, Zina, the guardian of the ginseng (the root of life). Zina is in love with her work, which gets her unstinted attention.

"When I saw her at work, I understood at once that she was a happy woman who had found her path in life from early youth." Very characteristic is the conversation between Zina and the bored, dandyish Kolm, another expert working in the reservation.

"'How can you bear to live here, in Krivoi, all the time? Always alone in the forest?'

"Zina did not answer. He again asked:

"And how much do you get? Next to nothing, I suppose!'

"'What do you mean?' said Zina heatedly. 'Even if they paid me still less—I would work all the same... Don't you see....'

"'Ah! I understand,' said Kolm. 'It's the food and equipment that count!'

"Zina turned away."

Stavrovsky, chief of the reservation is an honest man, devoted to his duties in his own way, but an individualist, a dreamer, chiefly concerned with his own experiments in the rapid construction of pre-fabricated houses.

The old horticulturist Ivan Antonovich is another attractive figure, with his passionate devotion to his work. A keen insight into the work of the reservation is displayed by the old taiga hunter Degtyarev, who is skilled in taiga lore, and regards as his personal enemies all those who do not understand the forest and its animal life.

The story is built up with a telling simplicity and a thorough knowledge of the material, a knowledge of the specialist. On the other hand, it has definite literary merit. Its convincing characters, its lucid style, its superb description of nature belong to the best traditions of Russian classic literature. If, however, Turgenev's realistic but lyrical pictures of nature, and Chekhov's impressionist treatment of the same subject almost always provided the background for human emotions or actions, with Emelyanova, nature is not the background, but plays an active part in the story. In this, Emelyanova is close to Mikhail Prishvin, who asserts man's beneficial, constructive power over nature.

While Emelyanova portrays nature with the precision of a scientist, she has the touch of an artist describing nature in all her moods, in all her profuse wealth.

"The brown water flowed freely and, as it appeared at first, unhurriedly. From time to time it seemed to stop and think. Near our field, where the water turned inwards to the bank in a wide inlet, the waves swirled round and turned back, forming something like a fishing pool.

"On the broad breast of this new river the foam scudded merrily, forming a kind of path. The foam approached the banks, now on one side and now on the other, and its path indicated the swiftest course of the current. Along this path sped tree trunks carried along by the water....

"The air was filled with fragrance. You could not walk under the velvety canopy without raising your head to breathe deeply. The perfume of maples, poplars and firs reached you in waves through the air, and on one occasion I noticed a change in the scent of the cedars; the smell of ripe resin had been added to it. Yes, everything had matured in the wood, and only the unmown grass gave off a faint odour of decay."

Later, in the pre-war years and during the war, the theme of nature acquires a new significance in Emelyanova's works becoming more clearly identified with the idea of Homeland. In two of her short stories: *On the River* and *The Amateurs of Vessyegonsk* Emelyanova again returns to man's influence on nature and here, as in the *Ussurian Taiga*, the change in nature is born of man's new attitude to it.

In *The Amateurs of Vessyegonsk* [1] Emelyanova shows the impact of the news of war on the people of the River Mologa: "Early on the morning of June 22nd, on the most magnificent day of the year, a terrible threat hung over our fields, woods, rivers and lakes, over our people and everything they loved and cared for, over our past, present and future." This threat was not as yet known to all. The people went about their usual duties. "Ivan Ignatievich, bending over the hives ... placed the frames back in their places ... and there could have been no greater condemnation of the treacherous German attack than that peaceful labour under the clear, warm, sunny sky."

Nina Emelyanova accompanied her husband, Colonel Kozlovitsky when he left for the battle area.

The experience of the war years, all that Emelyanova saw at the front and in the rear, found particularly vivid expression in her works: *The Surgeon*, a novel published in 1944, and *Four Springs*, [2] a long short story.

The action of *The Surgeon* takes place in a Moscow hospital during the grim days of the autumn of 1941. The hero of the book is the head surgeon Pyotr Alexandrovich, a man in his late fifties, with a name in his field. He has ... "a magnificently shaped head, beautifully and finely posed on a powerful neck, the broad forehead running into a wide bald patch. The distinguished features, the black eyebrows, the dark, restless eyes, the firm fresh skin and black pointed beard, set off by the snowy whiteness of his smock, combined to impart an expression of independent, slightly supercilious superiority, as if this man was accustomed to doing everything better and more correctly than most people, and as if he were used to others recognizing this superiority."

When he discovers that owing to a nurse's oversight a patient's temperature has risen after a period of initial recovery following a successful operation, he flies into a rage. "You have no right to spoil other people's work, d'you understand? It's every person's duty to respect the work of his colleagues, to continue it and not to spoil it. One tiny screw may spoil a whole mechanism. D'you understand that, or don't you?" he shouts at the nurse.

Pyotr Alexandrovich is a portrayal of a prominent Soviet scientist. Pyotr Herzen, the famous Moscow surgeon, who died at the beginning of 1947, (the grandson of the Russian publicist and writer Alexander Herzen, author of *My Past and Thoughts*) served as the prototype for this character. Emelyanova, who worked as a nurse in his hospital for several months was closely acquainted with him, and had an opportunity

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[1] See *Soviet Literature* No. 3, 1946.

[2] See *Soviet Literature*, No. 12, 1946.

of watching him at work. "In drawing this character," she says, "I only had to describe what I had seen, there was no need to add anything."

Pyotr Alexandrovich's chief assistant and favourite pupil was the surgeon, Semyon Ivanovich, man of the people, a carpenter's son. Before the Revolution, the poverty of his family prevented him from getting an education. After 1917 he attended a workers' faculty, served with the colours and, finally, entered an institute of medicine. His choice of a profession was subconsciously guided by his childhood impressions. His father's village lay near Gorki, the place where Lenin lived for long times at a stretch. Semyon's father had seen Lenin and even spoken to him on one occasion. The boy Semyon himself saw Lenin once, and had stood near him. Thus the image of Lenin as the embodiment of human nobility, of honesty, love of freedom, courage, and singleness of purpose became something intimate and dear to Semyon Ivanovich from early childhood. He was present at Gorki when Lenin died. When Lenin's open coffin was carried out of the house, Semyon saw the tears in his father's eyes as he stood in the crowd around the doorway. For the first time Semyon felt a protest against the blind power of death. "Semyon saw Lenin's face, and only then did he realize what death meant. 'So when *it* comes nothing can be done about it!' he thought to himself. 'So nobody can avoid death? Nobody? How can that be?'"

His studies came easily to Semyon, but the more knowledge he acquired, and particularly when he began to work under Pyotr Alexandrovich, a sense of his own imperfection began to oppress him. Semyon Ivanovich, who is a man of talent and extremely exacting in his demands upon himself, enters upon a phase of tormenting doubts of his own ability. The head surgeon stands constantly before him, as a symbol of all that seems so difficult to attain. Semyon Ivanovich shamefacedly admits to himself, that like the majority of other doctors in the hospital, he finds himself copying the head surgeon, but mostly in externals, in small details of mannerisms, instead of trying to understand the secret of the latter's skill, of his profound knowledge of the human organism, of his powers of observation.

Two operations performed by Pyotr Alexandrovich are described in the book, and the description is so minute and exact that some specialists have expressed the opinion that the book could be used as a manual for medical students. But what is most important is that realistic description is blended with a fine psychological analysis of the behaviour of all present in the operating room, from the head surgeon down to the patient. When the operation is over, the author shows the surgeon demonstrating to his young colleagues his perfect command of his fingers.

"He raised both hands and showed the surgeons around him how well the muscles of his fingers obeyed him. The first joints, which with most people bend only with the second, bent freely one after another."

He goes on elaborating this subject; then passes off to an amusing story about a beautiful lady who asked him to perform an operation so as to fill up a hollow she had on the neck between the clavicles as it spoilt her *décolleté*. Thus he finds relief from the strain of the operation.

Constantly revealing the secrets of his art to his assistant and favourite pupil, Pyotr Alexandrovich repeatedly emphasizes the absolute necessity of putting aside "pernicious" pity, of seeing before you on the operating table not a man who arouses your compassion, but only that part of the human body which needs "mending", restoration.

Semyon Ivanovich had a patient in whom he was particularly interested, the sniper Losev who had accounted for 46 Germans. "They laid me out—only one, one for forty-six. That shows my price is high," said Losev of himself. This Siberian hunter with a constitution of iron, was wounded in the abdomen, and, immediately on reaching hospital, was operated on by Semyon Ivanovich. He had a relapse some time after the operation, and Semyon Ivanovich was tormented by the thought that the man would die because he, Semyon Ivanovich, was unable to save him. He turned for help to the head surgeon:

"It is awful to think that Losev may die," said Semyon Ivanovich.

"Death, my dear boy, is the fundamental law of life, and so far is binding on all," answered the head surgeon.

"But tell me one thing," persisted Semyon Ivanovich, "could *you* have saved Losev's life?"

"In this case, no more than you," answered the head surgeon.

However, Pyotr Alexandrovich's answer does not calm Semyon Ivanovich, or relieve him of his feeling of responsibility for Losev's life. During a spell of night duty, he decides to operate again, and drives away his thought of asking the head surgeon to perform the operation. Something tells him that only he can succeed, because he has thought out every detail so painstakingly and thoroughly; nobody can know better than he what must be done to save the man.

Most worrying was the thought that, during the operation, he might not be able to keep himself detached and aloof from his personal feelings for Losev, to overcome his "pernicious pity", and acquire the coolness and self-command so indispensable to the surgeon. Before the operation, he telephoned to Pyotr Alexandrovich, not to ask for permission or shift responsibility, but because his friendship with the head surgeon is something more than professional, a deep and abiding sympathy. As he prepares to operate he reads boundless trust and confidence in Losev's eyes, and looking down, takes up his scalpel.

"Something departed from Semyon Ivanovich, leaving his senses clearer and more alert. One sensation was very vivid. The man Losev with qualities which he, Semyon Ivanovich, had loved so dearly, had vanished. He was no more. His burning eyes, his broad magnificent forehead, his friendly hands had vanished too. There was only the operative field, and he himself was coolly and clearly

conscious of what had to be done—not to the man Losev, but to this section of a human body which had suffered damage."

What followed was vindication of Semyon Ivanovich's perfect mastery of his profession, the fruit of long and painstaking analysis, training and study, the achievement of perfection through hard work, when the mind is in full command of the body.

This is the climax of the novel, the completion of the development of Semyon Ivanovich's character, as described in the book.

Parallel with the basic theme—the struggle of the human mind against the blind forces of death, runs another theme, the imparting of experience, knowledge and skill; the torch of human progress is passed on from generation to generation, in an eternal forward movement. The author describes with great warmth the head surgeon's friendship for his pupil, to whom he imparts all his knowledge, and reveals all his "secrets". The reader feels that this man is placing his life's work into reliable hands, that Semyon Ivanovich may even achieve more than his teacher has been able to.

While giving a favourable appraisal of Emelyanova's book, critics have noted that whereas Semyon Ivanovich's character is depicted in its development, the portrait of Pyotr Alexandrovich is somewhat static.

In my opinion the book has another and different shortcoming. Semyon Ivanovich loves and respects his teacher not only as a great surgeon but also as a man; we feel this in all his actions and thoughts; a similar attitude is shown by the wounded who call the head surgeon a "real man". Yet the author has not sufficiently substantiated this attitude towards Pyotr Alexandrovich. The professional side is shown as predominating in the character of the head surgeon, and the lines in the book which depict Pyotr Alexandrovich outside his profession are too sparse. The inner life of even the greatest specialist is not confined only to his work and the portrayal of Pyotr Alexandrovich would have gained had the author, with her usual tact and talent, revealed the whole of his personality. This omission is all the more disappointing because in all other respects the artistic merits of the novel are beyond dispute. Such scenes as the night of Peskov's death in the "severe cases" ward, may justly be included amongst the best there is in Soviet fiction. Although the dialogues are always brief, they are expressive, and each character speaks his own individual language. It is regrettable that this feature loses somewhat in the English translation of *The Surgeon* (published by Hutchinson and Co., Ltd., in London). Numerous details of hospital life are chosen with such skill that far from dimming the human interest, they emphasize it.

This last feature is typical of all Emelyanova's works. Even *In the Ussurian Taiga*, where so much space is devoted to nature, the centre of attention is held by man, and the theme of man's fight against nature, outlined in this book, is echoed by the theme of the fight against death in *The Surgeon*.

Lack of space prevents us from giving a detailed analysis of Emelyanova's short stories, most of which are extremely interesting both in form and content. Let us take just one of them—*Four Springs*.

If a number of people were to be asked about the subject of the story, the replies would be different. Some would speak of the courage and endurance of Soviet people during the war; others of selfless mother love; and others still of the sources of heroism. These replies would all be right.

"In my opinion a good book is one in which life throbs between the covers like blood under the skin. . ." Mikhail Kalinin once said, speaking of the writer's art. In Emelyanova's works, life always throbs between the covers. That is why her novels and short stories are so intensely human.

In *Four Springs* through the every-day, private lives of ordinary people, through the relations between the members of a family, and their attitude to their neighbours, through the way they react to the trials of wartime are revealed their attitude towards their social duty, their courage and their faith in victory. With the fineness of detail and eloquence of expression usual to her, the author draws a number of scenes from every-day life, some of them achieving the visual impressiveness of genre paintings.

The author's own attitude to her characters is always clear and humanistic. Along with the negative features of her characters, she always shows their positive qualities. Take for instance, the captain's wife, who is foolish, somewhat stingy, and a gossip; at the same time she is a loving mother, a hard-working and honest woman. However, the author's main attention is concentrated on her positive characters; in this story they are Pauline and Sasha, a friend of the Sergeyev family. Neither of them do anything extraordinary or take part in outstanding events. However, their moral integrity is revealed in their every-day actions and thoughts, in their very "ordinariness". They are fully capable of complex, psychological analysis, of deep thought, but this does not prevent them from being people of action.

The city scenes presented in this story are especially noteworthy. A sense of the close ties between man and nature, so characteristic of Emelyanova's works, is strongly felt even in a story staged entirely in a city.

Four Springs will be the title story in a volume containing fourteen of Emelyanova's short stories about to be published, some for the first time. Their themes and locale are varied, but all of them are marked by a vivid and exact reflection of reality, the ability to select the most characteristic and typical details, the concentration of attention on Man, whose attitude to society is shown through his individual features, his surroundings and the circumstances of his life.

At present, Nina Emelyanova is completing a new book *Zamanye* based on material collected during her eight years of work in the Yenisei taiga. At the same time, she is engaged on a novel about the Soviet intelligentsia, the heroes being representatives of several generations of geologists.

VALENTINA SERGEYEVA

SLANDER IN THE GUISE OF SCHOLARSHIP

Gleb Struve's *Twenty-Five Years of Soviet Russian Literature* has won the approval of the British press. The book, said *The Times* apropos of the latest (1946) edition "originally appeared in 1935, and those who could best appreciate the merits of his work then will be specially glad that he has, to the best of his ability, brought it up to date." The *New Statesman* said that it "has many virtues. It is remarkably comprehensive. Mr. Struve is extremely fair-minded and keeps his head and his sense of justice in a world dominated by political passions."

The eulogies of Mr. Struve's work in the British press and the fact that a second edition has been published could not but arouse amazement among honest and objective readers. Struve, and the "free" press that so generously advertises him, have presented the public with an unfair and incompetently written collection of distorted facts slandering the Soviet state and the Soviet people in the form of what purports to be an objective and scientific history of Soviet literature.

Struve's book is shot through with a hatred for the U.S.S.R. which the author makes no attempt to disguise. In the preface to the latest edition he answers those critics who charged him with a lack of objectivity. "The chief accusation levelled against me (based apparently not so much on the book itself as on a certain 'foreknowledge') was my 'lack of sympathy' with my 'subject', by which was obviously meant my lack of sympathy with the present political régime in Russia." In other words Struve admits without equivocation that he is an enemy of the Soviet system. He claims, however, to have analyzed Soviet literature without prejudice. "As I was writing about Russian literature, and not about the Soviet Union in general, I refused to take this accusation seriously."

Struve, therefore, divorces Soviet literature from the Soviet state. This, in itself, is unjustifiable, since Soviet literature is of the very flesh and blood of the Soviet state and is its reflection and expression in art. The two are indivisible; Struve's hostility to the Soviet state must inevitably involve hostility to Soviet literature. He hates Soviet literature in the same way as he hates the social system that has given birth to it.

In order to give a semblance of plausibility to this separation of literature from the social system, Struve resorts to a device which is typical of his whole "critical method": he ascribes everything written in Russian to Soviet literature. He includes under this heading those writers and literary groups in the struggle against which Soviet literature was born, and even gives them incomparably more space in his *History* than he gives to genuine Soviet writers. This trick robs the book of all proportion and distorts the nature of our literature.

Here are a few typical examples of this particular brand of dishonesty. The post-revolutionary work of Maxim Gorky, this greatest of the modern Russian classics and founder of Soviet literature, is dealt with in two and a half pages; Mayakovsky, the best and most talented poet of the Soviet era gets two pages; Dmitri Furmanov, whose novel *Chapayev* gives us an epic picture of a Civil War hero, is dismissed in four lines! Nikolai Ostrovsky, the favourite writer of Soviet youth and author of *How the Steel Was Tempered*, has twelve lines that say nothing; while Makarenko's famous *Pedagogical Poem* is found worthy of only seven lines! All these together are allotted less space than the very mediocre but extremely reactionary writer Zamyatin whose work is twice reviewed in Struve's book, allotted a total of thirteen pages!

Struve deliberately ignores or distorts important trends in Soviet literature, those which determine its real character, and places the anti-Soviet writers in the foreground. Why does he need to introduce Zamyatin who did not create any single work of significance? This adept at mimicry and falsification, whose whole conception of life was culled from literary reminiscences and bore no relation whatsoever to reality, left no trace in literature and has been completely forgotten by the present generation of Soviet readers. The secret is easy enough to guess: Zamyatin once wrote a malicious satire on socialism entitled *We*, and our "objective" Mr. Struve (who, the *New Statesman* says, "keeps his head and his sense of justice in a world dominated by political passions") devotes eight pages to a detailed rehash of the contents of this lampoon which is noteworthy neither for its wit nor its talent; and he smacks his lips audibly as he churns out this anti-Soviet propaganda.

With equal punctiliousness he "analyzes" the philistine writings of Mikhail Zoshchenko that have long been exposed as a miserable, petty-bourgeois distortion of Soviet reality. Struve requires eight pages in which to eulogize Zoshchenko and to declare, contrary to the facts, that he is "the most popular" writer. Struve misleads his readers by assuring them that this writer by his misshapen caricatures, his slanderous portrayal of Soviet people as primitive beings with philistine tastes and manners "gives the truest picture of the Soviet weekdays stripped of all heroism and romanticism, of all pretension and make-believe." Zoshchenko, incidentally, had a 'tradesman's' attitude towards life and wallowed in the mire of petty every-day affairs and could never rise to the heights required to paint an extensive canvas of life with a realistic picture of its typical characters and manifestations.

The examples given are typical of the whole structure of Struve's book. Everything that shows the positive side of Soviet society and its literature is either ignored or distorted. By this simple piece of dishonesty Struve "proves" that a considerable section of modern Russian literature is anti-Soviet in character. Struve even tries to prove that writers who are firmly convinced and fervent supporters of the Soviet socialist system give expression to the counter-revolutionary viewpoint. He

says that in ". . . *And Quiet Flows the Don*, Sholokhov tries to be objective and impartial and to a great extent succeeds in it—partly because, though consciously he is on the side of the Revolution, his *subconscious sympathies seem to lie with the Cossacks and their traditional mode of life*, which the Revolution has upset or destroyed." Struve makes Sholokhov only a subconscious opponent of the Revolution but Leonov, in his estimation, is a conscious enemy. In analyzing the views held by the "old believer" Vissarion and others in the novel *Sot* Struve writes that "one feels that to a certain extent Leonov sympathizes with them."

It will be remembered that in his novel *Sot*, Leonov tells the story of a group of "old believers", obscurantists and extreme reactionaries, who hide in the depths of the primeval forest and there set up a community that preserves barbaric feudal relations, and oppose this community to the new society. These forces of darkness are overcome by men of culture and progress who conquer Nature for the benefit of man. This is another obvious attempt on the part of Struve to use one of his own inventions to libel a talented Soviet writer.

Here is another example of Struve's method of distorting the contents of the work of a Soviet writer. He says that *Virgin Soil Upturned* "gives a striking and powerful picture of the compulsory collectivization of peasant farms in the Don Cossack Region and of the Cossacks' overt and covert resistance to it. . ." The fact that collectivization was not compulsory is sufficiently well known. The hundred million free people who constitute the Soviet peasantry could not have been *compelled* to follow any path. Anybody who has read Sholokhov's novel knows that he shows how the consciousness of the necessity for the new type of farming, collective farming, grows amongst the peasant masses and how the private property psychology of the Cossacks gradually dies out. The novel introduces to the reader a whole portrait gallery of convinced protagonists of the new ways of rural life and shows how collectivization, supported by the poor, labouring Cossacks is resisted only by the small section of rich *kulak* farmers, who exploited the poorer Cossacks.

If Struve is capable of such shameless distortion of well-known works the reader may well imagine how he treats lesser known novels.

Struve's "interpretation" of literary works is intended to further the not very subtle purpose of lowering the prestige of Soviet reality and the literature that it has created. He shows a profound hatred for everything Soviet; everything anti-Soviet, therefore, enjoys his sympathies. His yardstick in estimating the worth of an author is the following: if Soviet people are shown as positive characters, the writer is tendencious; if white-guards and counter-revolutionaries form the positive characters, the writer is talented and worthy. Even such a second rate novel as Lebedenko's *Heavy Division*, long forgotten by Soviet readers is boosted by Struve who says that it "holds one of the first places in Soviet War literature" and that only because Lebedenko's "anti-Bolsheviks, especially the officer Aldanov, are human and lifelike."

In an effort to distort at all costs the real character of Soviet literature, Struve tries to represent works that are filled with a profound idea and have rich social content as idealess and anti-social. With complete disregard for the truth he asserts that Leonov's *The Thief* "has no definite political tendency, no political or social message to bring, no political axe to grind." And this of a novel that is saturated with social problems, a novel that is devoted to the struggle between the old and new tendencies in the first years of the Revolution. His analysis of the Soviet historical novel is equally false. He maintains that a considerable section of Soviet historical novels is escapist and includes under this heading the works of Olga Forsh, Yuri Tynyanov and Anatoli Vinogradov. Olga Forsh's novels take as their subject the revolt of gifted people against the police system and the serfdom of Russia in the 18th and 19th centuries; Tynyanov's historical tales are an incisive satire against the autocracy (*Wax Figure* and *Lieutenant Kizhe*), and his novels deal with the Russian Jacobin Kyukhelbeker and the progressive writers Pushkin and Griboyedov; Vinogradov described Toussin l'Overture's revolt, and in his novels about Stendhal and Paganini he stresses the contact maintained between the French writer and the Italian musician and the Carbonari movement. These novels, therefore, cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be placed in the category to which Struve banishes them, the "category of historical novels in Soviet literature, those of which the impulse is not to reflect the Revolution or its precedents in the past, but rather to escape from the every day and the contemporary as the Symbolists once did."

Struve's assertions become merely funny when he touches on Alexei Tolstoy's *Peter the Great (Imperial Majesty)*. Struve does not dare deny the literary value of this work but he counterposes it to the rest of Soviet literature! *Peter the Great*, incidentally, is an outstanding example of the method known as socialist realism as applied to the historical novel. Tolstoy has recreated the brilliant figure of the reformer of Russia, one of the most progressive men of his time.

The examples which I have given only concern works that are known throughout the world, but from these the reader can see that Struve's book is a compilation of malicious lies and distortions devoid of any sort of objectivity calculated to mislead completely anybody who puts his trust in the author.

Struve's incompetence in the field of Soviet literature is revealed in the very structure of the book. He divides his writers into groups in the most arbitrary manner. Such divergent writers as the symbolist Andrei Bely, the proletarian writer Maxim Gorky, the leading Soviet realist Alexei Tolstoy and the reactionary epigone and eclectic Zamyatin are all crowded into the same chapter. In one place Struve groups his writers chronologically ("Pre-revolutionary writers after 1924"), in another according to style ("Two Revolutionary Romantics"), in a third according to

genre ("The Revival of the Novel," "The Historical Novel," "The Drama"), and in general on political grounds ("The Proletarian Writers," "Counter-Revolutionary Tendencies in Soviet Literature"). Under this classification Gladkov, Fadeyev and Sholokhov get into the division on "Proletarian Writers" and have no place in the "Revival of the Novel" although Gladkov's *Cement*, Fadeyev's *The Nineteen* and Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don* were all-important to the development of the Soviet novel; these works played an incomparably greater role in the "revival of the novel" than the books of Kaverin, Slonimsky, Savich (!) and Lavrenev.

And what is Mr. Struve's critical analysis worth? He writes of Gorky's *Decadence*: "There was in it even more firmness, concentration and solidity . . . in addition to his usual gift of keen observation." And that is all he can say. The four-volume epic *Bystander* is treated even more cavalierly: "*Life of Klim Samgin* (the Russian title of the novel) lacks the power and concentration of its predecessor," he says. Only a writer completely lacking the critical faculty could display such a poverty of ideas in analyzing the greatest works of 20th-century Russian prose. In general, Struve does not bother too much with the esthetic criticism. He has on hand a number of stereotyped phrases culled from newspaper reports and uses them to describe the whole wealth of Soviet literature. What is the following analysis worth? "Ehrenburg is by nature incapable of any enthusiasm, a deeply-rooted cynicism is after all his fundamental and most permanent quality. He is one of those men who have lost faith in anything." Even if we regard these lines as having been written for the first edition of the book in 1935—by that time Ehrenburg had published his *Thirteen Pipes*, *The Love of Jeanne Ney*, *The Second Day*, *Without a Pause for Breath*—novels brimming over with the passion of the publicist, with an enthusiasm for the titanic reconstruction that was in progress in the Soviet Union. Struve, however, is not greatly concerned with the truth.

Struve's cynicism, however, reaches its greatest height when he says that "Gorky was never strictly speaking a proletarian writer." And this of the world's first proletarian classic!

Struve's flippant and careless attitude to the subject he is discussing shows his superficiality and incompetency. This is manifest when he discusses theoretical questions. "Literature of the Revolution," he writes, "has produced many works of human and documentary interest, but hardly a single great work of art." It might have been assumed from this statement that Struve regards Soviet literature as a truthful document depicting the era in which it was produced but which had not sufficient time to reach the heights of artistic expression. On the other hand we find that his concrete criticisms are diametrically opposed to this conclusion. How is this to be explained? What are Mr. Struve's own esthetic ideals? Struve, it seems, has in mind prototypes that are far more worthy of imitation than Chekhov or Tolstoy. These are "works of deep human significance such as are represented in modern English literature by E. M. Forster's *Howards End*, by Charles Morgan's *The Voyage*, by the best of Virginia Woolf's books." One does not, of course, quarrel with taste — some people prefer Leo Tolstoy—others, Virginia Woolf. Struve, however, has very definite tastes. In politics he sides with the reactionary and anti-Soviet clique, in art he is a protagonist of decadence, estheticism and formalism—a very natural combination—a reactionary in politics is as a rule a reactionary in art.

Struve continues his analysis: "Perhaps the Revolution has been too insistent a background for literature. What Soviet literature reflects is this ever present background or the bright but fragmentary flashes." Almost in the same breath he says that Soviet literature "has failed so far to encompass, in fearless detachment, the whole of the Revolution." In this case (and throughout the whole book) Struve not only sins against logic but also against the facts. Does not the Revolution stand out clearly in such works as Mayakovsky's *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin* and *Good*, Alexei Tolstoy's trilogy *Road to Calvary*, Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*, Fadeyev's *Nineteen*, and many others?

Struve wrote his book piecemeal. The chronology of Soviet literature which he uses is determined to a considerable extent by the chronology of his own "creative" work. The first edition dealt with Soviet literature up to 1935. For the second edition he wrote an "epilogue" reviewing Soviet literature for the period 1935-1943. In this way he introduces a milestone into his history at the year 1935 which does not mark the beginning or the end of any period in Soviet literature. When Struve republished his book he did not go to the trouble of recasting it in accordance with new material available, but simply added a new chapter.

In the first part of the book Struve also made an attempt at producing a periodization of Soviet literature up to 1935; as the very antithesis of scientific method this periodization far outshines all his other "conceptions."

The basis on which Soviet literature is divided into periods is the attitude to the so-called "fellow-travellers." This boils down to the following: up to 1923 the Soviet authorities showed a negative attitude towards the fellow-travellers; then comes the period in which they were "amnestied" (1924-1928), after which he has a new period of the "compulsory proletarianization" of literature (1929-1932); and lastly there is the period beginning in 1932 in which there is a slackening of the "pressure" on non-proletarian writers.

In the first place the term "fellow-travellers" needs explaining as it has long since lost the original meaning in which it was used by Soviet critics. The term "fellow-traveller" arose in the early days of Soviet power when gentlemen like Struve did not limit themselves to slandering the Soviet state but used armed force in an attempt to overthrow it. A section of the intelligentsia who supported Soviet power on certain questions and who collaborated only up to a point, were called "fellow-travellers." As the Soviet

state developed its achievements became so convincing, the justice of its ideas was so fully confirmed that the "fellow-travellers" were not only won over to the full platform of Soviet power but became its most active supporters and chroniclers (sufficient proof is the fact that Leonov, whom Struve defines as a "conscious" opponent of Soviet power, is now a deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.)

Struve is unable even to array his facts when he tries to develop his ridiculous theory. If we compare Chapter V with Chapter XIII, in which Struve's self-styled "conception" is developed, we see that he himself gets mixed up in his periodization. In Chapter V he divides Soviet literature into the periods—1918-1923, 1923-1929, 1930-1932. In Chapter XIII, however, he introduces different periods: 1918-1920, 1921-1924, 1925-1929, 1929-1932, 1932-. The reader is left to sort out this chronological tangle for himself. The reason for this confusion is that Struve does not give an objective history of Soviet literature, but one that is based on subjective criteria which have nothing whatever to do with the development of the Soviet Union or its literature. The periods into which Soviet literary history may be divided are: 1) the Civil War period, 2) the period of reconstruction, 3) the period of Socialist construction, 4) the period of the Patriotic War, and the new period which begins with the defeat of Germany and the return to peacetime construction. All these periods find vivid and artistic reflection in the works of Soviet writers. It is the life of the people, of Soviet society, and not the fate of a few individual writers, which determines the path of development of Soviet literature.

After his hopeless jumble in periodization, Struve passes to the subject of socialist realism only to demonstrate his complete bankruptcy. Despite the fact that he devotes two chapters to this subject Struve is unable to explain to his readers what socialist realism is. In one place he describes it as a revolutionary method and in another he says that "Socialist Realism is potentially conservative." He, himself, does not understand the specific features of socialist realism and asks "why Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Upturned* should be regarded as a work of a Socialist Realist and not of a realist *tout court*?"

One has only to go to Maxim Gorky for a very clear definition of socialist realism and the literature of socialist society:

"For the venomous, prison-like abomination of the past to be well understood and described, one must develop the ability to examine it from the heights of present achievements, from the heights of the great objectives of the future. This elevated point of vantage must and will produce that proud and joyful ecstasy that will give our literature a new tone, will help it create new forms and will create the trend which we require—socialist realism which—it goes without saying—can only be created on the facts of socialist experience."

As evidence of the worthlessness of Struve's critical assessments we need only cite his allusions to the Russian classics. He says, for example, that Leo Tolstoy was of no great significance to the development of Russian literature. *War and Peace*, he asserts, "has remained a solitary isolated fact in Russian literature, though the influence of his manner purely outward, however—can be perceived in the case of some second-rate historical novelists like Count Salias." (Comment is superfluous!)

The classical Russian playwrights also come under Struve's heavy hand. He says unequivocally: " . . . And what there was of the original dramatic literature, was, with a few exceptions, eminently undramatic and untheatrical. Such was, after all, practically the whole theatre, not only of Chekhov, but also of Ostrovsky."

I shall not waste time in references to the generally accepted fact of Chekhov's influence on 20th-century drama of the whole world. Struve denies this as brazenly as he distorts the history of the Russian realistic theatre that has grown up on the basis of the works of Ostrovsky and Chekhov and which even our enemies admit is the best theatre in the world!

In a preface to his book Mr. Struve explains that it grew out of a course of lectures delivered by the author at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London. I have mentioned a few examples of his unscientific approach and unconscionable misrepresentation and it seems very strange to me that a chair of London University should be open to such an unreliable lecturer. I can only say that I am sorry for the students and for the general reader whose knowledge of Soviet literature is based on Professor Struve's book.

In the name of education he is poisoning the minds of students and of a broad circle of readers with his ignorant and malicious spite directed against the U.S.S.R. and her people. The fact that the author lectures at a university and his book is approved, not condemned, by the British press, cannot but evoke surprise in the Soviet reader, and make him ask himself why is it that London University students and the general public tolerate such a man and his work—the work of an anti-Soviet politician passed off as a scientific monograph? Surely they can distinguish between a scholar and a charlatan!

At one time English students of Russian literature read the works of an undoubted connoisseur, Maurice Baring, whose sober analysis of our literature was not made for the specific purpose of inculcating hatred and disgust for Russian literature as Struve's book undoubtedly is. Baring's books, of course, are now out-of-date and contain several inaccuracies, but they were written by a scholar and scientist who had very obvious sympathies with his subject, Russian literature and the Russian people, which is more than can be said of Struve. I remember that before Baring's time, one of the earliest interpreters of Russian literature was Matthew Arnold. What a fall—from Arnold to Struve!

ALEXANDER ANIKST

NEW BOOKS

LENINGRAD MAGAZINE ZVEZDA

Last summer the Leningrad magazine *Zvezda* came in for some sharp criticism in a special decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and later in a speech by Andrei Zhdanov.

The magazine had levelled against it the accusation that, along with works of indisputable significance and merit, it published a number of works lacking deep ideological content, trivial and reactionary. In printing literary works permeated with an ideology alien to the Soviet world outlook, the magazine became less exacting to the esthetic quality of the published works.

That the magazine has greatly benefited from criticism directed at it is borne out by the seven issues printed this year. Poems, prose works and articles published in these issues are of a decidedly higher level, with a content expressive of the spiritual attitudes of Soviet people, and catering to the broad scope of their interests.

Along with the publication of literary works faithfully portraying the new man of Socialist society, the magazine devotes serious attention to the problems of literary theory.

Articles on questions of literary theory recently published in *Zvezda* have acquainted the reader with the views held in this realm by such great men as Lenin and Stalin, Kalinin and Maxim Gorky. An article by B. Meilakh (Issue I) *Lenin and Questions of Art in the Period of Reaction* deals with Lenin's opinions in the realm of literature and art given in his classic—*Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. This book, which contains a scathing critique of the idealistic philosophy of Mach and Avenarius and their adherents Petzhold and Bogdanov, establishes a number of cardinal points in regard to the purpose of art and the tasks of the artist.

"The process of perception, according to Lenin," writes B. Meilakh, "encompasses not merely the comprehension of the laws governing reality but the changing of reality as well. For Lenin, art, in the words of Marx, is a means of 'comprehending the world.' It is not the irrational 'will of the artist', or his cultivated skill in reproducing subjective 'sensation complexes,' or yet his 'intuitive vision,' but life itself which constitutes the content of his work and determines its creative principles—such was Lenin's guiding principle when he touched on esthetic problems in his analysis of the gnosiology of empirio-criticism."

An article by N. Eventov entitled *M. I. Kalinin on Russian Literature* (Issue 3) presents a number of utterances by Mikhail Kalinin, in effect an exposition of Lenin's views. "Our literature," Kalinin wrote, "the works of our best writers, are marked by a hatred of evil, as a most noble sentiment and an effective weapon in the struggle against the foes of mankind." In his appraisal of Russia's great literary heritage Kalinin wrote: "Our past literature and art were great not only because of their truth, but more so because at all times they sought for better paths, for a better way of living for the people."

In this we see a direct continuity in the social tradition of Russian classic literature of the 19th century and contemporary writing. The magazine's section of literary criticism develops these same theoretical questions in its analysis of concrete literary works. B. Ryurikov's article, for example, *Routine in the Trenches and Its Heroics*, a review of Victor Nekrasov's *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* and G. Berezko's novel *The Night of a Commander* raises the question of the substance of poetic sentiment and its social impact. The question of ideological art content in connection with poetic form and range of subject matter furnished the material for two heated discussions—one on poetry (Issue 5) and the other on prose (Issue 6), in which different points of view on the merits of recent literary work clashed.

Apart from questions of literary theory and reviews of books, the magazine publishes the latest findings in the field of linguistics. An example of this is V. Zhirmunsky's article *Origin of National Languages in the Light of Comrade Stalin's Teachings on Nation*. The article deals with Soviet research in the field of national languages, which only thirty years ago were completely suppressed on the territory of the former Russian empire. V. Zhirmunsky writes: "A most important weapon in the national-political struggle is the struggle for a national language. . . Students of languages set themselves the task of developing and improving the national language and struggling for its rights: first—the teaching of the national language in schools of various types, later—teaching in the national language and the establishment of national schools." Research in the native language is made possible only when that language receives the right of free development and expression as is the case in the Soviet Union.

The prose works, which constitute the greater part of the magazine, mostly belong to the monumental epic genre—the novel. In the first seven issues they are represented by Vera Ketlinskaya's *Under Siege* (Issues 6 and 7), Nikolai Ravich's *Story of a Great Northerner* (Issues 3 and 4) and Gennadi Fish's *Stone Grove* (Issue 7).

Vera Ketlinskaya's novel is the first attempt to give a monumental portrayal of the heroic events relating to the defence of Leningrad.

Nikolai Ravich's novel is based on the biography of Mikhail Lomonosov, great Russian scientist and poet of the 18th century. This fisherman's son walked all the way from the shores of the White Sea to St. Petersburg, to be able to get an education, rising to be regarded as the founder of many branches of Russian science. The novel covers only a part of Lomonosov's biography; he is shown as already holding a professorship in the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Gennadi Fish's *Stone Grove* describes the life of the inhabitants of an impoverished Karelian village. Hardly had the village folk succeeded in improving their lot and

set out on the road to prosperity (the action of the novel is laid in that part of North Karelia which became part of the U.S.S.R. in 1939), than the village fell into the hands of the Finnish invaders and their Hitlerite masters in 1941, and was razed to the ground. The first part of the novel deals with the great difficulties of post-war rehabilitation with which the war-weary village folk have to contend. The dramatic tension of the novel is derived from a situation whereby the village folk realize that they must change their entire way of life if they wish to achieve a decent living standard. Denying themselves the bare necessities of life, the collective farm folk get busy erecting a power station, realizing that it will help boost yields and deliver the people from the misery brought about by the fascist invasion.

Another large-scale prose work is Alexander Rozen's novel about the heroic defence of Leningrad and the breakthrough. The heroes are ordinary Soviet people, soldiers of an army unit, depicted in their struggle against the Germans.

Among the short stories regularly published in the magazine along with the larger works, are a number marked by the fresh and vivid style and a realistic portrayal of life. (Victor Starikov's *Serko and the Driver Anissim*, Vadim Sheffner's *The Unknown Friend*, Vadim Koszinsky's *Success* and others). However, the art of short story writing in Soviet literature, so far, has been falling behind in its development as compared with the monumental genre of novel. This accounts for the fact that though some of the short stories published in *Zvezda*, are praisworthy, this genre evokes a smaller degree of interest.

New Soviet dramatic works are represented in the magazine by three plays—*The Fate of Reginald Davis*, by V. Kozhevnikov and I. Proot (Issue 4), *Our Daily Bread* by N. Virta and *Life in the Citadel* by A. Jakobson (Issue 5.)

The Fate of Reginald Davis is based on the writers' personal observations of life in occupied Europe. Reginald Davis, a United States officer, who serves with the Yugoslav partisans and is wounded, rejoins the American army after V. E. day. He is unaware of the changes that have taken place in U.S. policies since he went overseas, which was in Roosevelt's time. He sees the military administration of the occupation zone collaborating with fascist remnants. The American occupation authorities find it more conducive to their selfish interests to establish contact with the Italian fascists than with the Italian and Yugoslav working folk who will not sell their country. The play deals with the drama of Davis himself who is unable to grasp what goes on around him, becomes Quixotic in some of his actions and, honest American and true democrat, refuses to reconcile himself with the existing state of affairs. The play breathes faith in the American people and their democratic tradition, a faith boldly affirmed in the face of a candid, unbiased and unvarnished portrayal of the triumph of America's reactionary forces.

August Jakobson's play *Life in the Citadel* is an outstanding example of Estonian drama. To Professor August Milas, an eminent Estonian classical scholar, his home is his castle. He has not the slightest interest in politics and when his country is overrun by the Nazis he extends equal hospitality to Hitlerite agents and to those who are fighting for the freedom and independence of Estonia. However, with the turn that events take in his own family, his illusions are soon dispelled, and prompted by his conscience and his concept of honour, he joins the struggle against the fascists.

Nikolai Virta's *Our Daily Bread* is a play dealing with the Soviet village, the struggle of the Soviet collective farmers for the most efficient and productive way of working the land. The main dramatic conflict of the play develops around the central character, Tverdova, chairman of the village Soviet, a dominating and clever woman. Tverdova's popularity begins to wane when she grows shortsighted, too practical in the narrow sense and too preoccupied with personal success so that she soon forfeits the trust of the people.

The magazine's Poets' Section presents a variety of genres ranging from epics of the times to emotional reactions caused by fleeting impressions, nature sketches and love lyrics. Thus the magazine endeavours to give expressions to the full range of Soviet poetic sentiment. Vissarion Sayanov's *A Scorched Place* (Issue 5) gives a picture of a war-scarred village where "even the trees are war invalids" and "the charred, twisted tanks lie in a tangle of wire and cobwebs." Amidst the bleakness of the scene the poet catches sight of a newly-built house and this, the creation of human hands, personifies beauty to him. Maria Komissarova in her cycle of poems entitled *Happiness* (Issue 4) speaks of a happiness that "the enemy wanted to kill and drown in blood" but which "would not drown in blood, would not burn in fire and would not rot in the ground." Another poem *It's Winter in Leningrad* revives memories of childhood in other parts, in Kostroma, where "The Volga sky is spread with sunset and snows are like flocks of swans. . . ."

In Mikhail Dudin's two poems *The Poet* and *In Memoriam* (Issue 3) we find reflections on the purpose of poetry and the essence of inspiration.

In Issue 7 Nikolai Braun presents a series of poems in which nature, landscape and the poet's mood give rise to meditations on the purpose and meaning of human activity.

The examples cited above hardly exhaust the range of themes and diversity of form presented by the Poets' Section. Among the poetic works of the many peoples of the Soviet Union *The Family* by Andrei Belevich, a Belorussian poet, appears in Issue 2. Rendered into Russian by Alexander Prokofiev it tells the story of the family of a Belorussian peasant who was driven from his native soil by the fascist invaders and returns after victory.

The rendering into Russian and the publication of epos of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. may well be regarded as a noteworthy achievement of Soviet culture. This work, the result of collective effort begun on the initiative of Maxim Gorky, consists in the collec-

tion, systematization, translation into Russian and publication of national epics. One of the most important of these is the ancient Estonian saga *Son of Kaleva* (Kalevipoeg). This poem, which reflects the struggle of the Estonian people against the German conquerors—the knights of the Teutonic Order—was first published in Estonian in the middle of the last century. The magazine's publication of selected runes from the Estonian saga is only the first step in acquainting the Russian reader with this work; the full Russian translation of this product of the Estonian genius, is to be published at a later date.

Selected works by the poets of the various nationalities of the Soviet Union appear regularly in *Zvezda's* Poets' Section. Estonian poems, for example, were published in Issue 3; Latvian, in Issue 5; and selections from Yanka Kupala, prominent Belorussian poet appeared in Issue 6.

Finally, the Poets' Section regularly publishes contributions from young poets. In selecting these, the magazine attempts to give as broad a cross section as possible of poetic temperament and current subject matter.

Translations of works by contemporary Western European and American authors are also regularly published in this Leningrad magazine. This year's first issue, for example, contained Julius Fučik's *Reportage From the Gallows*, Issue 2 brought James Howe's and Arnaud D'Usso's *Deep Are the Roots* to the Soviet reader while Issues 4 and 5 presented Elliot Roosevelt's *As He Saw It*.

Of extreme interest is the magazine's Science Section which published in the first seven issues L. Friedland's *While the Brain Sleeps*, on sleep treatment; V. Safonov's *Creative Power of Light* devoted to the work of Timiryazev, famed for his new theories of plant life; L. Friedland's *Longevity* dealing with the research of A. Bogomolets and V. Negovsky; and *Science Forges Ahead* by D. Slaventantov which tells the story of how the history of the Urartu people, the long-extinct ancestors of the present-day Armenians, was unearthed.

The science articles bear witness to the humanism of Soviet scientists whose work is directed towards the bettering and easing of man's life. Even when delving into the history of a people of almost 30 centuries ago, as academic a problem as any, this humanistic tendency in Soviet science is manifest. The historical material relating to the past of the Urartu people brought to light by Piotrovsky, a pupil of Academician Nikolai Marr, the distinguished Soviet linguist, serves as a concrete illustration to this scholar's teachings.

According to Marr, the development of the social structure is the primary factor in the growth of language.

At a certain stage in the history of human society, Marr stated, the Japhetic (Caucasian and Basque) group of languages arose; at another, a more complex stage—the Semitic: Hebrew, Arabic and Assyrian; at a third, still more complex—the Indo-European: Greek, Persian and the modern European languages. In this way the origin and development of the languages of different families is not an expression of racial characteristics but the outcome of various stages in the development of society.

Obviously this theory is directed against the Indo-European, or, correctly, the Indo-Germanic theory based on the "idea" of the superiority of certain peoples over others; the adherents of the latter claim, for example, that the modern Armenians are a people of Germanic origin who came from the West to settle on their present territory.

The article on the unearthing of the past of the Urartu people is as exciting as the most thrilling adventure story when it tells how Piotrovsky set out to establish the location of an ancient Urartu fortress. The expedition had been completed just before the outbreak of the Soviet-German war. Piotrovsky having returned to Leningrad took up Civil Defence duties and later fought in defence of the heroic city. He lived through all the hardships and sufferings of the siege, working all the time on the findings of his expedition. It was during the siege that he completed his book on the history of the Urartu people, a noteworthy contribution to historic science and a valuable document in the struggle against anti-scientific race theories.

A variety of subjects is covered by the magazine's feature section. In the year's first issue this section published *A Story About Myself* by A. Krivtsov, a Hero of the Soviet Union. This is a simple, artless tale of a man who displayed outstanding bravery while serving as scout in the artillery. *On the Gas Pipe Line*, a feature story by I. Koltunov, pays tribute to the builders of a new gas pipe line stretching several hundred kilometres from natural gas sources on the shores of the Baltic to Leningrad. *Big Lights* by A. Sadovsky endeavours to show how machine-minded the Soviet country has grown, with the scene laid in a plant where serial production of 100,000 kilowatt capacity turbines was launched last year.

That the *Zvezda* is evolving into a new Soviet type of magazine of literature, public affairs and politics, aiming at a broad coverage of contemporary phenomena, and philosophic and artistic depth in its analysis of the life of today, is borne out by what has so far been published this year.

SELECTED WORKS OF AN ARMENIAN CLASSIC POET

Ovanes Tumanyan. *Selected Works*. Translated from the Armenian. *State Literary Publishing House*. Moscow. 410 pages.

Three poets, writing at the close of the 19th century, ushered in a new period in Armenian literature.

Valeri Bryussov, the Russian poet, called Ovanes Tumanyan, Ovanes Ioanisyan and Avetik Isaakyan "a constellation of three bright stars in the firmament of Armenian literature."

Outstanding features of Ovanes Tumanyan's work are its expression of the characteristic traits of the new Armenian poesy, its adherence to folklore, its depiction of social injustice, and the historical destiny of his people.

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Tumanyan had an excellent knowledge of the Armenian epos, and of Russian, Oriental and Western-European literature. He translated into Armenian Pushkin and Byron, the famous Georgian poet Chavchavadze, Heine, Gorky and Longfellow.

The various phases of Tumanyan's work are represented in the anthology compiled by the *State Literary Publishing House*. His poems *Maro*, *Anush*, and *Sako From Lory*, are amongst his best work and depict Armenian rural life in the 19th century.

Tumanyan does not idealize the rigid traditions of Armenian patriarchal life. With the perspicacity of a true artist and democrat, he shows how stagnating customs and religious prejudices hindered the Armenian peasant from living and working in freedom. The poem *Anush* is a tale of the ardent and pure spirit of an Armenian girl, who loves the shepherd Saro, and rebels against the despotism of her parents. The fierce unwritten law of the village descends upon the "rebels." Anush and Saro die a tragic death, alone and without sympathy. A similar fate awaits Maro, another of Tumanyan's heroines, who, married off against her own will, refuses to live with a hated husband. Madness born of his solitary life in the mountains is the lot of Sako, the shepherd from Lory.

In *David of Sassun* and the *Capture of Timkaberd*, Tumanyan makes full use of the Armenian epos and the historic past of his people.

Tumanyan's fairy tales and ballads, based on Armenian folklore, are widely represented in the collection. Among them are *The Dog and the Cat*, a clever fairy tale for children, *Pegos and Petras*, a pathetic lyrical legend of two boys who run away from their cruel stepmother, and *Parwana*, a philosophical ballad about the search for eternal life.

The collection also includes Tumanyan's famous quatrains, written during World War I; these are philosophical reflections on the destiny of the Armenian people. One of the finest of Tumanyan's prose works is *Tikhor*, the story of a poor Armenian boy apprenticed by his family to a brutal merchant, in whose house he dies of hunger, beatings and grinding toil.

Tumanyan was a talented publicist. His articles reveal him as a critic and historian of literature, as a prominent citizen and political figure. He wrote on the vocation of a poet, the fraternity of the peoples and on folklore, always remaining a staunch democrat and an exacting artist.

Tumanyan dedicated the last days of his life to the creation of a new Armenia.

In 1920 he wrote: "Bear in mind that the events now taking place have not come by chance. Such is the course of history: our future, as I have always pointed out, is bound with that of Russia and the freer Russia is, the better for the world."

Tumanyan died in 1923.

Numerous Russian translations of his works have appeared both before and since the Revolution.

The new volume consists of Soviet translations by Lipskerov, Rumer, Marshak, Shaginyan, Simonov and others. Also included are translations by Tumanyan's contemporaries: Bryussov, Balmont, Vyacheslav Ivanov and Khodasevich.

The biographical essay on Ovanes Tumanyan was contributed by Kward Tumanyan.

NEW EDITIONS OF RUSSIAN AUTHORS

M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin. Selected Works. 607 pages
V. G. Belinsky. Selected Works. 671 pages.
N. S. Leskov. Selected Works. 462 pages.
M. Y. Lermontov. Selected Works. 332 pages.
State Literary Publishing House. Moscow.
Alexander Blok. Complete Collection of Poems in 2 volumes. 682 pages.
L. A. Mey. Poems and Drama. 570 pages.
V.S. Kurochkin. Collection of Poems. 585 pages.
"The Poet's Library" *Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow.
L. N. Tolstoy. *Stories from ABC Book*. *Children's Publishing House*. Moscow. 44 pages.
D. N. Mamin-Sibiryak. Selected Works. *Leningrad Publishing House*. 623 pages.
A. G. Kuprin. Novelets and Stories. *State Literary Publishing House*. Moscow. 244 pages.

The State Literary Publishing House is continuing the publication of a series of one-volume selections from Russian classics. The Saltykov-Shchedrin volume includes *The History of a Small Town*, *Golovlyov Family*, *Mon Repos*, *Satirical Traveller's Notes in Foreign Lands*, and *Innocent Tales*. A. Lavretsky, literary critic, has edited the text and written an introductory article on the life and work of Saltykov-Shchedrin.

The selection of the works of Vissarion Belinsky, 19th-century Russian critic, contains *The Idea of Art*, *Literary Reveries*, *Division of Poetry Into Genres and Species*, a number of other essays on the theory of art and literature, his critical articles on the works of Gogol, Pushkin, Lermontov, Krylov, and selected letters to Herzen, Bakunin, Aksakov, Botkin and Stankevich. The introduction and notes are by F. Golovenchenko, a Belinsky scholar.

More than twenty stories by Nikolai Leskov, that outstanding master of Russian classical prose, are collected in a single volume. Some of them are: *Lady Macbeth of the Mzensk District*, *The Enchanted Wanderer*, *The Toupee Artist*, *Lefty*, *Iron Will*, *The Sentry*. For this edition B. Drugov has written an article on Leskov's work. The author's son, A.N.Leskov, edited the text and wrote the commentaries. The volume also contains excerpts from A. N. Leskov's biography of his father. It is illustrated by B. Kustodiev, M. Dobuzhinsky and N. Kuzmin.

The greater part of Mikhail Lermontov's verses and longer poems, his dramas and prose writings have been grouped in another one-volume edition, prefaced by an article on the poet's life and work by I. Mikhailov. The illustrations are by D. Shmarinov.

A collection of verses by Alexander Blok, complete in two volumes, has been added to the "Poet's Library." This series, initiated by Maxim Gorky, comes from the *Soviet*

Writer Publishing House. The two volumes include Alexander Blok's verses, his *Autobiography*, prefaces and the commentaries written by the poet himself for his *Complete Works* and separate editions; there are some translations of Heine by other poets edited by Blok.

Variations and other Versions of Blok's poems, some of which appear in print for the first time, are included in volume two. The introductory article *The Lyrics and Poems of Alexander Blok*, and the commentaries are by the editor, V. Orlov, an authority on the poet's literary work.

Poems and plays by Lev Mey, Russian poet of the latter part of the 19th century, constitute another book of the "Poet's Library" series. In addition to lyrics, Mey is the author of numerous interpretations of Russian folk tales, legends and ballads. Rimsky-Korsakov used two of Mey's historical dramas as the basis of his operas *Pskovitianka* (A Woman of Pskov) and *Tsarskaya Nevesta* (The Tsar's Bride). Translations of the ancient and Western-European poets, and poetical versions of the Bible are also included in the same edition. The introductory article and notes are by S. Raiser who edited the volume.

A volume of verses by Vassili Kurochkin, the well-known Russian democratic poet of the 19th century, author of revolutionary and satirical verses and translator of Beranger and Heinrich Heine, has been released by the same publisher.

The selection was made by I. Yampolsky who also annoted the verses.

Leo Tolstoy's well-known *Stories from ABC Book*, written by the great writer in the form of short entertaining and instructive tales, has been released by the *Children's*

The cover for Tolstoy's Stories from ABC Book

Publishing House in a de-luxe edition, illustrated by the Soviet artist V. Kurdov.

A Dmitri Mamin-Sibiryak anthology has been brought out by *Lenizdat*, the Leningrad Publishing House. Mamin-Sibiryak, the novelist and student of life in the Urals and Siberia, lived at the close of the 19th century. The volume contains the writer's most popular narratives, among them: *The Privalov Millions*, *The Fighters*, *The Forest*, *The Scamp*, and others. The editor, I. Gruzdev, contributed an introductory article on the life and work of Mamin-Sibiryak.

Alexander Kuprin, Russian writer of the turn of the 19th and the early part of the 20th centuries, is represented in a collection issued by the *State Literary Publishing House*. The novelets and stories include *Olesya*, *The Almandine Bracelet*, *The Emerald*, and others.

Illustration for The Hero of Our Time
by D. Shmarinov

A CHRONICLE OF TRAGIC YEARS

Alexander Rubakin. *Notes on France*. *Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 257 pages.

Alexander Rubakin, a Soviet doctor, has written an interesting book on France in the years of 1940-1943. The author lived in France for a period of twenty-five years and knows and loves her courageous and freedom-loving people, her arts and sciences.

One of the book's principal themes is that of the two Frances. Rubakin writes—"We all knew and loved the France that was the centre of European cultural life, the homeland of great revolutionary ideals and principles. But there was another France where reactionary fraud and malice reigned supreme, where people were primitively cruel, and disguised their cruelty by a superficial veneer of culture. In the concentration camp we saw this particular back yard of

France in the period when the abominable reaction of Hitler's agents in France was triumphant."

Rubakin does not attempt to cover the gamut of events that shook and undermined France. These notes describe what he himself saw and are only a page in a tragic history of a country, betrayed by reaction and drugged with the poison of fascism.

The first part of the book tells of the outbreak of war, of the "drôle de guerre," as it was called by the French themselves. France declared war on Germany under the pretext of protecting her Polish ally, but did not extend any actual help. The French army languished in the trenches, demoralized for want of action, while in the rear, newspapers waged a ferocious battle against . . . the U.S.S.R. The government, condemning the front to inactivity, warred with their own people, set up innumerable concentration camps and crowded them with their own citizens, prosecuting patriots and the indomitable France of the People's Front. Meanwhile the newspapers reported that the "Cagoulards", jailed for hoarding stores of German and Italian arms in pre-war days, had been released as a sign of "national reconciliation."

The war, however, soon ceased to be a comedy. The climax was at hand. France collapsed in a month. The French rulers left the people to their own fate. Petain's government surrendered unconditionally to the Germans. Years of humiliation and slavery ensued. Germany's attack on Russia compelled Rubakin to flee Paris. He succeeded in crossing the demarcation line into the "free zone" of the Vichy government. Rubakin went to Vichy where the Soviet embassy was then located, but on June 30th the Vichy government, in compliance with a German order, severed diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R. which resulted in Rubakin's arrest by the French authorities.

The author was marched off like an ordinary criminal to the Vernet concentration camp, near the Spanish frontier, without having been interrogated or informed of the reason for his arrest. Incidentally, this camp was set up by the French government in 1939 for the purpose of interning Spanish republicans and fighters of the international brigades. After crossing the border and surrendering their arms, hundreds of thousands of fighters for free Spain were put behind barbed wire. In this camp they were the first to suffer the humiliation and privations which fascism held in store for its enemies. Their fate is one of the most tragic pages of pre-war history, to be more exact, the first stage of the most terrible and cruel of all wars.

Vernet camp was then crowded with victims of the Vichy government whose policy was to imprison their enemies, that is to say, the enemies of fascism. People belonging to nearly forty different nationalities were confined in this camp. There were no French for the sole reason that under the Petain régime imprisoned French anti-fascists were deprived of French citizenship. Many of those confined in the camps had fought in the ranks of the French army, had been wounded and decorated. The camps were not only a means for isolating the anti-fascists from the population, but were aimed at a gradual physical extermination of those convicted.

The living conditions at Vernet camp were truly horrible. The prisoners suffered hunger and the brutality of the camp guards. Still more monstrous were the conditions at the Jelpa camp in Africa, to which the author was transported in 1942.

Notes on France by Rubakin are eyewitness evidence against the traitors of the French people and constitute a gripping document accusing those who prepared the collapse of France long before the beginning of the war.

NEW TRANSLATIONS

Honoré de Balzac. *Collected Works*. Vol. 17 and Vol. 20. 305 and 297 pages.
Anatole France. *The Revolt of the Angels*. 204 pages.
Jack London. *The White Silence*. 126 pages.
Pierre de Ronsard. *Selected Poems*. 122 pages.
Louis Aragon. *Selected Poems*. 42 pages.
Alfredo Varela. *Dark River*. 163 pages.
State Literary Publishing House. Moscow.
Heinrich Heine. *Selected Works*. 175 pages.
Joseph Conrad. *The Duel*. 111 pages.
Children's Publishing House. Moscow-Leningrad.
Erskine Caldwell. *Selected Stories*. *Ogonek* Magazine Library, *Pravda* Publishing House. Moscow. 62 pages.
Nigel Balchin. *The Small Back Room*. 334 pages.
Arthur Conan Doyle. *Sherlock Holmes*. 468 pages.
Young Guard Publishing House Leningrad-Moscow.

The State Literary Publishing House has issued volume 17 and volume 20 of the collected works of Honoré de Balzac. The editorial staff, working on this edition, was headed by E. Korsh and the late Anatoli Lunacharsky.

The 17th volume includes the first novel of the *La Comedie Humaine* translated by Nemchinova. The introduction to the novel was contributed by the literary analyst, professor Ivan Anisimov. Volume 20 includes Balzac's Philosophical Essays. (Méditations de Philosophie eclectique).

The same publishing house issued a new edition of *The Revolt of the Angels* by Anatole France, which has been several times translated and published in the Soviet Union. This translation was done by Boguslavskaya and Ivanova. The book is illustrated by Bechteyev.

A collection of stories by Jack London includes *The White Silence*, *The One Thousand Dozen*, *The Story of Keesh*, *Love of Life*, *The Mexican*, and *The Odyssey of the North*.

The stories are translated by Eleonskaya, Daruzes, Georgievskaya, Kislova and Man. The book is prefaced by Abel Startsev.

A pocket volume of Pierre de Ronsard's selected poems, translated by Levik, has been released by the *State Literary Publishing House*. In his introduction to the collection,

the translator says that in selecting and translating Ronsard's verses, he endeavoured to "show, primarily, the Ronsard, who remains alive despite the four centuries that separate him from his readers, his full-blooded realism that enraptures and excites, notwithstanding the mythological attire of his characters."

The collection includes 72 verses, among which are *French Anthem*, *When a Valiant Fighter, You Are a Gaul by Nature*, and verses from the cyclic poems *Love for Cassandra*, *Love for Mary*, *Love for Helen*.

A collection of Louis Aragon's verses has been published by the same publishing house. The verses of Aragon were translated by Antokolsky, Pesis, Parnakh, Zenkevich, Knipovich, Brik and Kochetkov.

The collection is introduced by an article *Louis Aragon in the Days of the War* written by professor Ivan Anisimov. The twenty-five poems included in the volume are from the books: *Le Creve-Cœur*, *Les Yeux d'Elsa*, *Le Musée Grevin*, *La Diane Française*.

The *State Literary Publishing House* has also released a novel by a contemporary Argentine writer Alfredo Varela—*The Dark River*, a tale of life on an Argentine tea plantation. The book was translated from the Spanish by Margarita Kessel.

The Children's Publishing House has released an edition of Heinrich Heine's selected works. The collection includes 47 verses from the cyclic poems *Buch der Lieder*, *Neue Gedichte*, *Zeitgedichte* and the poem *Deutschland* (The Winter Tale).

Translations by Lermontov, Fet, Blok, Bryussov and other leading poets, as well as those of such Soviet translators as Tynyanov, Levik, and Lozinsky, have been included in this edition.

The book was edited and supplied with commentaries and introductory notes on the poet's life and work by the eminent literary scholar Alexander Deutsch.

The edition was designed and illustrated with engravings by Echeistov and Rostovtsev.

The *Children's Publishing House* has issued a separate edition of Joseph Conrad's story of Napoleonic France, *The Duel*, in Boguslavskaya's translation. The book is designed by Dubninsky. An introductory article by Ivan Kashkin deals with the life and work of Joseph Conrad.

Selected stories by Erskine Caldwell make up a new edition of the *Ogonek* magazine library. In the collection are: *The People vs. Abe Lathan, Coloured*; *Saturday Afternoon*, *The Midwinter Guest*, *The Corduroy Pants*, *Nine Dollars' Worth of Mumble*. Caldwell's stories have been translated by Daruzes, Bat, Volzhina and Kislova.

The *Young Guard* Publishing House has issued a war novel *The Small Back Room* written by Nigel Balchin, a promising young British writer. The translation is by Polonskaya and Grigoriev.

The Leningrad branch of the *Young Guard* Publishing House has issued a collection of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories translated by Voitinskaya and illustrated by Dvoranovsky. The introduction written by Gromov and Kostellanets deals with Conan Doyle's approach to the detective story.

THE POET-CITIZEN

V. Evgeniev-Maksimov. *Nekrasov*. The *Young Guard* Publishing House. Moscow. 165 pages.

Evgeniev-Maksimov's biography is an entertaining narrative of the life of Nikolai Nekrasov and, at the same time, an analysis of his literary legacy.

Nekrasov's childhood spent on the verdant banks of the Volga, on the estate of his father, a cruel, serf-owning landlord, left its imprint on the poet's literary work and nourished in the heart of the future poet a bitter hatred for oppression and slavery, and a tender love for his native land and his suffering people.

The hard years of his youth, which Nekrasov spent in St. Petersburg after falling out with his father, revealed to him the horrible life of the poor in all its misery and wretchedness.

Close contact with the life of the "Insulted and Injured" in their squalid peasant huts and miserable urban cellars provided Nekrasov with an unlimited supply of material for his poems, his songs of "wrath and sorrow."

His meeting with Belinsky and the friendship that ensued played a decisive role in modelling Nekrasov's outlook on life.

Evgeniev-Maksimov gives a vivid picture of the crushing reaction of the last regnal years of Nikolai I, the severe literary censorship, the turbulent social life of the sixties and the period after the so-called "peasant reform," which though claiming to emancipate the peasants from serfdom, did not in any degree improve their lot.

A brilliant organizer, Nekrasov succeeded in rallying all that was best in literature and literary criticism of that period around his magazine—*Sovremennik* (The Contemporary): Turgenev, Goncharov, Tolstoy, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, Ostrovsky, were among its many brilliant contributors.

Nekrasov's own verses published in the same magazine, met with a warm response from progressive society. Not only did Nekrasov write about his people; he wanted his poems to be poems for the people. To achieve this, Nekrasov followed the examples set by Krylov in his fables, and Pushkin in his poetical tales, making extensive use of the language and folklore of the common people.

This enabled Nekrasov to create such gems as: *Peasant Children*, *The Haberdasher*, *The Forest Song*; *Arina, the Soldier's Mother*, *Jack Frost With His Red Nose*.

A special chapter of the book contains an analysis of Nekrasov's famous poem—*Who Lives Well in Russia*, which may rightly be called an epic of the common man. Nekrasov worked on this poem throughout his lifetime. His object was to produce a vast canvas of the life of the various classes of the Russian society in post-reform years and determine the ways that lead to the people's (peasants') happiness.

In *Grandpa* and *Russian Women* Nekrasov praised the courage of the Decembrists (the heroes of the December revolt, 1825), as well as the unsurpassed heroism of their wives, who chose to share with their men folk the hardships of exile and penal servitude in Siberia.

The book ends with an account of the poet's last years, a period of protracted and agonizing illness during which Nekrasov wrote his famous *Last Song*, a poem that deeply moved all Russia.

The funeral of Nekrasov was unprecedented as a manifestation of popular mourning for Russia's great citizen and poet.

TWO BOOKS ON RUSSIAN ARTISTS

Alexei Savinov. *Alexei Antropov. Art* Publishing House. Moscow. 31 pages.

Lev Varshavsky. *Alexandre Opekushin. Art* Publishing House. Moscow. 24 pages.

The realistic art of Alexei Antropov (1716-1795), an artist of the period following the reign of Peter I, helped further the development of the Russian school of painting.

Today a few stray allusions in archive materials constitute our only information on the life and work of Antropov.

At the age of 33, Antropov was officially recognized and ranked as an "apprentice of art."

During that period he worked for the most part on the decoration of pompous palaces and churches erected in St. Petersburg and its environs and in Kiev (the embellishing of the St. Andrew's Cathedral, designed by Rastrelli) in the middle of the century.

Antropov's first portrait, which, incidentally, is one of his best, is that of A. N. Izmailova, a lady-in-waiting at the court of Empress Elizaveta.

In painting Izmailova, Antropov succeeded in emphasizing the most striking features of her personality; clever, shrewd, haughty and contemptuous, she had a hand in all court intrigues. Izmailova enjoyed a privileged position at court, did not imitate the mincing fashions of the West—she was a typical Russian aristocrat, a land-owning *barynya*. Realistic expressiveness becomes still stronger in Antropov's later portraits. This is seen at its best in the portrait of the St. Petersburg Archbishop Silvester Kulibyaka. Psychological interpretation in Antropov's portraits is subtly blended with adroit decorativeness. The portrait of the Ukrainian ataman Krasnoshchekov is a splendid example of this union.

In the 50's and 60's Antropov executed a series of brilliant portraits of Peter III, A. Buturlina, M. Rumyantseva and others. In that period he worked out his artistic principles, denouncing the florid and frivolous style of the rococo, peculiar to European painting in the 18th century. The decorative effects in his portraits gradually became less and less noticeable. The artist adopted simple forms of expression and through intentional coarseness in his characterizations, abjured the flashy and pretentious art favoured by the court. Antropov devoted the latter part of his life to teaching. Among his protégés was Dmitri Levitsky, who together with Rokotov, was to become the outstanding portraitist of the 18th century.

Savinov concludes his book by saying:

"A marked tendency towards the creation of a true-to-life type was a feature of the Russian national art culture. During the efflorescence of art in the middle of the 18th century, this tendency was confirmed by Antropov's stern art, an art that taught observation of life."

Alexander Opekushin (1841-1923) created a great number of sculptures, chiefly monumental portraits (Tsar Peter I, the poet Derzhavin, Fieldmarshal Suvorov, the statesmen Potemkin, Rumyantsev and Orlov). But Opekushin is famous in the history of Russian art as the sculptor of the Pushkin monument in Moscow and that of Lermontov in Pyatigorsk.

Lev Varshavsky's book on the sculptor opens with a description of the inauguration ceremony of the Pushkin monument on June 6th, 1880.

Speeches at the inauguration were made by the writers Dostoyevsky and Turgenev, the poet Nekrasov and the playwright Ostrovsky.

In 1867, a prize was announced for the best design of a memorial to Pushkin. The appeal of the Memorial Committee met with a warm response on the part of many Russian sculptors, including Opekushin, who made an exhaustive study of the poet's works, and of biographical materials and documents pertaining to Pushkin's epoch and of all existing paintings, engravings and sculptures depicting the poet. Opekushin made numerous pencil sketches and models in clay, before arriving at the final solution.

For many years the leaders of Russian artistic and literary circles debated on the choice of the best project. Eventually, Opekushin's model was chosen as unifying a simple and natural poise with a truthful representation of the poet's appearance and personality.

The creation of a monument dedicated to Lermontov also involved a comprehensive study of materials and the production of a great number of models and sketches. The final project shows Lermontov sitting on a cliff with his head supported by his right hand. The figure of the poet and the monument's pedestal, the cliff, blend with the surrounding landscape which serves as decorative background and accentuates the sculptured figure.

These two magnificent statuary compositions have guaranteed their creator a place of honour in the history of Russian monumental sculpture.

NEWS AND VIEWS

LITERATURE

PLENARY SESSION OF UNION OF SOVIET WRITERS

The recent plenary session of the Presidium of the Union of Soviet Writers summarized the past year's work in the sphere of letters. The reports made gave a clear picture of the development of literature in all the Union republics and a number of literary problems were discussed.

In his report Alexander Fadeyev, Secretary General of the Union, spoke of a number of outstanding works written last year by Russian writers and by writers of the other republics of the U.S.S.R., several of which had won Stalin Prizes. Particularly noteworthy is the influx of newcomers to literature.

The status of literature in their republics was described by A. Korneichuk, S. Chikovani, Aibek, A. Venclova, K. Kraulin, and O. Urgart, chairmen of the writers' unions of the Ukraine, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, respectively.

Speaking of the new poets and prose writers who had come to the fore, tempered by the trials and hardships of the Great Patriotic War, A. Korneichuk said: "They brought to literature the priceless feeling of close bonds with the people, the knowledge of our men and women, of their strength of will and intellect, optimism, respect for all peoples, of their ability to overcome obstacles, and of their confidence in their own strength, in their future."

The poet Maxim Rylsky, of the Ukraine, discussed the great diversity of styles displayed by the young authors in his republic.

The progressive role of Soviet literature was stressed by Alexander Isbakh who, by way of contrast, outlined the situation prevailing in post-war literature of the West, with its pessimism, weariness and disillusionment.

Current problems of interest were brought to the fore by Alexander Tvardovsky and Vera Inber.

Tvardovsky spoke about the relations between the poet and the people, a question which had confronted all great Russian poets in the past—Pushkin, Lermontov, Nekrasov, and others. Speaking of our time he said: "It was the good fortune of our poetry of the thirties that there was no longer any need to enquire into these relations. We are in a better position because we have no cause to speak about the secondary role of the poet or of his tragic lot."

Tvardovsky pointed out that contemporary poetry is noted for still greater profundity of content, for narrative style and its close approach to life. "Poetry has launched on a bold rapprochement with prose," he said. "It has lost nothing from this rapprochement. Poems have acquired a plot, they carry dialogue, are marked by complex rhythms." Tvardovsky, however, levelled scathing criticism at the work of some of the young poets.

Vera Inber, who is chairman of the Union's poetry section, took up the cudgels on behalf of the youth. She named a number of works by young poets which had been highly praised by critics, such as *Flag Over the Rural Soviet* by Nedogonov and Tryapkin's verses.

Problems of literary criticism were discussed by Lev Subotsky, who noted that the main task of a critic is "to disclose, by analyzing literary efforts, the new traits of the modern progressive Soviet man." Subotsky ascribed most of the shortcomings of Soviet literary criticism to the fact that it "makes insufficient use of the theoretical wealth of Soviet Socialist esthetics to explain contemporary phenomena in literature." In Subotsky's opinion to be worthy of the name, a critic must at the same time be a philosopher and a historian. As a model he points to Lenin's articles on Tolstoy.

A large number of writers took the floor in the discussion on the main problems raised in Fadeyev's report and the co-reports; the main point which all stressed was that the portrayal of the spiritual forces of the Soviet man is the goal toward which all writers are striving.

TWO PAPERS ON ENGLISH LITERATURE

Two theses on themes of English literature, presented for scientific degrees were recently read in Moscow. One of them dealt with *Hamlet* and the other with the Italian period in Byron's life and letters.

The thesis by Yuri Semyonov—*History of the Translation and Criticism of Hamlet in Russia*—covered a period of nearly two hundred years. The author showed that Russia was one of the first European countries to become acquainted with Shakespeare's immortal play and that there are more translations of it in Russian than in any other language. The first rendition of *Hamlet* in Russian dates back to the year 1748 and altogether there are 17 translations and two adaptations.

In their study of *Hamlet* Shakespearean scholars in the West usually try to interpret the tragedy as proceeding only from the character of Hamlet himself. The theory of Hamlet's weakness, developed most fully by Goethe, dominated in the West almost to the end of the last century. As for those critics who regarded Hamlet as a man of strong will, they reduced the tragedy to one of unproved crime (Werder). In our times most students of Shakespeare in the West have given up the attempt to interpret the ideas of the tragedy (Van Doren), and advise readers and theatregoers to regard it the way children

and simple folk perceive fairy tales to pay more attention to details and retain the naivité and freshness of perception (Lewis).

Russian critics, however, have from the very outset sought after a profound interpretation of the tragedy. Indicative in this respect are the interpretations of *Hamlet* given by Sumarokov, Turgenev and other Russian writers. As far back as 1748 Sumarokov thus defined Hamlet's task: "Take vengeance upon the tyrant, free the citizens." Viskovatov who in 1810 gave a Russian rendition of *Hamlet* after a French adaptation by Ducis differs fundamentally from the French author in the portrayal of the hero. Viskovatov held that Hamlet's duty was to serve his country and be the people's friend.

Sumarokov's adaptation of *Hamlet* was not a distortion of Shakespeare's tragedy, as many literary scholars considered. By a careful analysis of Sumarokov's work, Semyonov showed that Sumarokov was not prompted by an attempt to adapt Shakespeare to the canons of classicism, but tried to stress the civic and political poignancy of the play. In their adaptations of *Hamlet* both Sumarokov and Viskovatov asserted the idea of the enlightened monarchy, which lent their work a progressive character.

The first line for line translation of *Hamlet* in Russian was done in 1828 by Vronchenko.

The next stage in the popularization of Shakespeare and *Hamlet* in Russia is associated with the names of Pushkin and Belinsky; Alexander Pushkin was the first true Shakespeare scholar in Russia. He was the first in Europe to speak of Shakespeare's system of dramatic composition and to define its distinguishing features. Russia's national poet was likewise the first to use Hamlet as an appelative, calling the poet Boratynsky a "Hamlet." Polevoy's translation of *Hamlet* and the acting of Mochalov were the subject of a series of interesting articles by Vissarion Belinsky. Belinsky was the first in Europe to break with the Goethe interpretation of Hamlet. Belinsky regarded Hamlet as a strong personality, to whom life is an exploit, and was likewise the first to point to the universal significance of the character, emphasizing that Hamlet's tragedy was not a purely personal affair but part of the universal evil against which Hamlet fought.

From 1844 to 1917 no less than 12 different translations of the tragedy were made. During this period much was done for the further elaboration of the Hamlet theme. Literary scholars wrote on this subject all the time, moreover, many eminent Russian writers expressed opinions on Hamlet and on the idea underlying the tragedy. The prevailing interpretation of Hamlet in these works is that of a noble champion of the truth and lofty humanist ideas; most writers stress the great social significance of the play.

Soviet literary scholars have assimilated the best traditions of the past and, applying the Marxian method, have raised the study of Shakespeare to a higher level. Soviet students of Shakespeare treat *Hamlet* as a tragedy of humanism.

New light on the Italian period in Byron's life is shed by Yuri Kondratyev's paper. The Italian period was both the most fruitful and most complex in Byron's biography. Many Western critics are prone to regard Byron's creative efforts as a sort of commentary on his love affairs, maintaining a conspiracy of stubborn silence about the poet's public activities, his speeches in Parliament, his support of the Luddites and of the national liberation struggle.

Yuri Kondratyev shows the different stages in the development of Byron's poetry in relation to the evolution of the poet's world outlook and his participation in the social struggle of his time. Kondratyev offers convincing proof of the fact that Byron's creative efforts were directly linked both with literary tradition and the social and political events of his time.

It was in Italy, during the period from 1817 to 1823, that Byron created most of his finest works. Both romantic and realistic motifs are closely intertwined in his writings of the Italian period. Notes of conscious social and political protest intermingle with notes of pessimism.

The main ideological tragedy of the poet, according to Kondratyev, is that Byron, while remaining loyal to the humanist ideals of the Enlighteners, witnessed the restoration of the absolute monarchy and the defeat of the national liberation movement in a number of countries, which led him to conclude that the realization of his ideals was practically impossible.

THEATRE

CHEKHOV'S UNCLE VANYA *REVIVED AT THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE*

The production forty-five years ago of *Uncle Vanya* at the Moscow Art Theatre was a prominent event in the world of the theatre, a red-letter day in theatrical history. For Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko this production was the fruition of their efforts to create a new stage method now known as the "Stanislavsky system" or "stage realism." For over thirty years the play was performed with no changes whatever in the production, and it was owing to the decease of some of the members of the cast that the play came off the theatre's repertoire about ten years ago.

The plan for a new production of *Uncle Vanya* was ready at the close of 1940 and rehearsals with a new cast—actors of the "middle generation"—were begun at the Art Theatre. To revive the old production, which had not lost its fascination for the public and moreover remained a classic of Russian stagecraft, seemed the natural course to take. Yet the Art Theatre did not choose to take this course and set out to create a quite new production. The depth, seriousness and thoroughness with which the theatre and cast set about their task are borne out by the fact that work on the performance continued for nearly seven years with no allowances made for wartime conditions.

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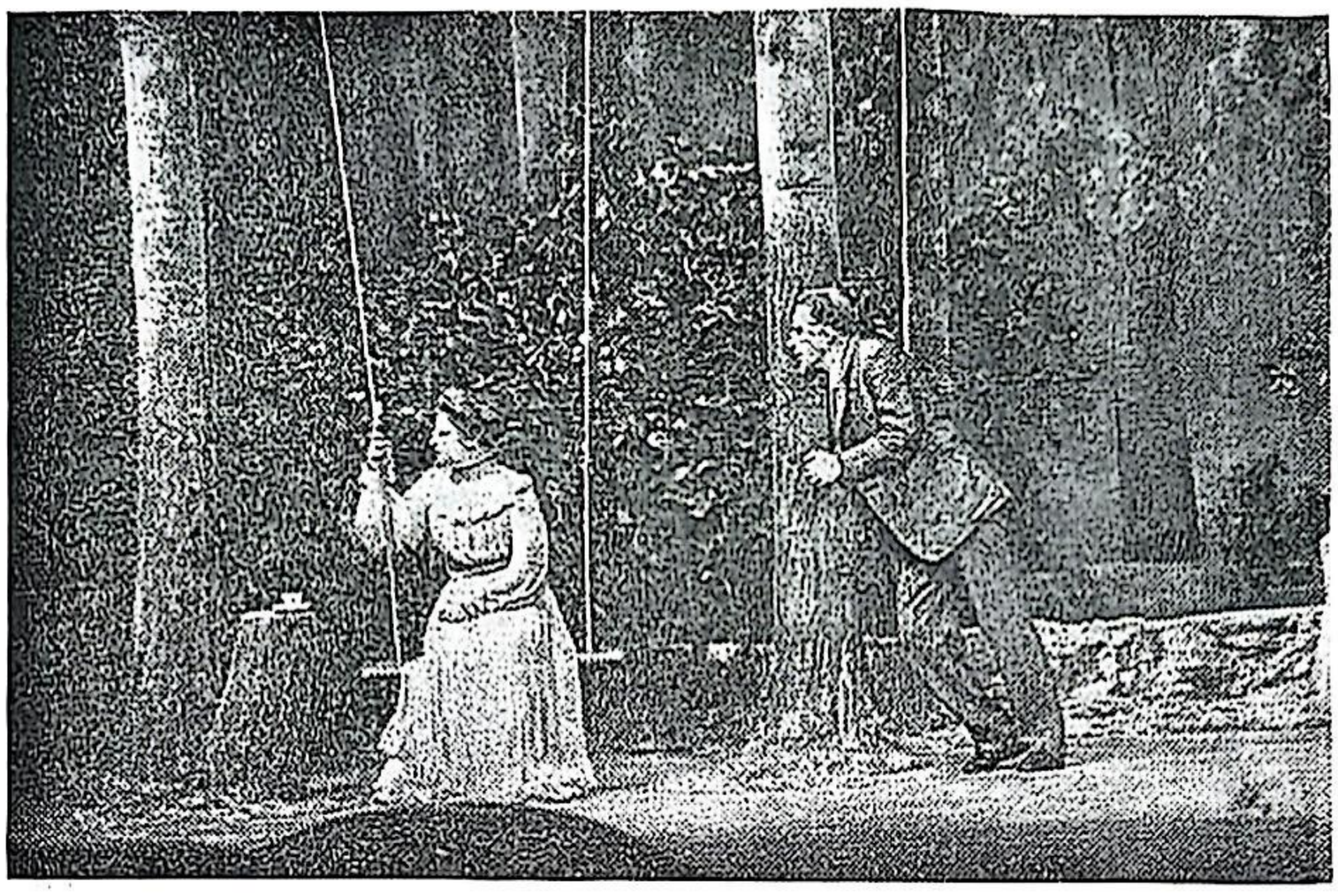


Scene from Chekhov's
Uncle Vanya

Scenes from village life in Russia at the end of the last century as presented in *Uncle Vanya* bring to the stage characters, ways of living and attitudes as remote as can be from the life of the theatregoer of today. What did the Moscow Art Theatre stress in the play that would most appeal to the modern theatregoer and what new interpretation did it embark upon? First of all, the theatre found a different approach to the clash between the dream of a just, rational and harmonious world and the harsh realities of life. The unselfish efforts of the dreamers are shown as a great practical force in society and their moral integrity is proved by history itself. This change of outlook throws new light on the main characters of the play.

However, in the revival of *Uncle Vanya*, producer Mikhail Kedrov, the theatre's art director, remains true to the traditions and method of the Moscow Art Theatre which is based on a faithful, realistic rendering of life. This relates both to recreating spiritual attitudes and reproducing the minutest details of exterior behaviour and scene. In his sets presenting the four seasons of the year in all the grandeur and colour of Russian scenery designer Vladimir Dmitriev creates a perfect illusion of nature.

Most of the responsibility in bringing home to the public the new interpretation of the play fell to Boris Dobronravov, a People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. who appears in the title role. Whereas in the old production Uncle Vanya's turning against the idol to whom he had given his whole life, against Professor Serebryakov, was the logical outcome of his personal failures and the realization of the hopelessness of his position, in the new production he rebels because he sees the discrepancy between his dreams of a beautiful world and the brutal reality of the life of the end of the last century. It is quite obvious that the latter interpretation is broader and deeper than the former; more attuned to the times and historical in the broad, philosophical meaning of the word. Dobronravov, who has won wide praise for his powerful performance is supported by a cast of outstanding members of the company of the Moscow Art Theatre with Tarasova as Elena Andreyevna, Livanov as Astrov, Yanshin as Vaflya. Ktorov appears as Serebryakov, Litovtseva as Maria Vassilievna, while Khromova, a student of the theatre's studio, makes her debut as Sonia.

BELORUSSIAN THEATRE STAGES HAMLET *FOR ITS JUBILEE*

Before the Revolution Belorussians did not have a single playhouse of their own. Art was represented by folk bards who roamed the countryside, singing of the hard lot of their people. The Revolution which brought Belorussia independence also gave rise to a mighty advancement of national culture. From hamlets and villages, from remote settlements in the marshlands young men and women who felt the call of the stage flocked to Moscow where the first Belorussian theatrical studio was formed under the guidance of regisseur V. Smyshlyaev. In 1926 two groups of actors who had completed courses at the studio presented their first productions in Minsk and Vitebsk.

During World War II when Vitebsk was under German occupation for three years, this beautiful and ancient town, on the banks of the Western Dvina, was turned into heaps of rubble. The Germans spared nothing, not even the monastery dating from the 12th century. When Soviet units liberated Vitebsk there were less than 400 inhabitants still in the town.

On returning to their native city the Vitebsk actors' company used as temporary premises the metal workers' club on the bank of the Dvina which by some miracle survived the invasion.

The Vitebsk theatre, which this year is celebrating its 20th anniversary, has an extensive repertoire. To mark this jubilee date, the company has decided to realize one of its ambitions, to stage *Hamlet* in a verse translation into the Belorussian language.

As produced by Merited Artist Valeri Bebutov, *Hamlet* on the boards of the Vitebsk Theatre is a vivid theatrical spectacle, where a wealth of colours and innovations is combined with emotion and profundity of ideas. Theatrical form never digresses beyond the bounds of the realistic.

In his interpretation of Hamlet, People's Artist of Belorussia Pavel Molchanov resorts boldly to methods of the romantic and heroic theatre. His interpretation has a sense of uplift, melodiousness of speech and sculptured precision of gesture. At the same time Molchanov carefully avoids overemphasis on mundane and psychological detail.

Molchanov's Hamlet is extraordinarily modern. Constantly stressing the duality of the hero's spiritual world, Molchanov at the same time delineates a character which corresponds to our present-day ideas of a man and the demands we make of him.

In this Belorussian production, Hamlet is a man of lofty ideals, who adheres undeviatingly to his principles and is exacting both of himself and of others. To him his personal fate is inseparable from that of mankind. He is possessed of great inner force, in him burns the fire of creative energy. Hamlet's life is shown on the stage as noble service, as an exploit performed for the sake of mankind, an irreconcilable and daring challenge to violence, hypocrisy and tyranny.

The heroic element in the portrayal of Hamlet is well brought out in the finale. At the foot of the stairs lie the bodies of Claudius, the queen and Laertes. In the foreground is the prostrate body of Hamlet with Horatio mournfully bending over him. As the strains of music die away, silence reigns on the stage. After a pause, the silence is broken by the rattle of arms and tread of feet as Fortinbras' soldiers fill the stage. Their bright-coloured clothes and shining shields dispel the gloom of the preceding scene. After Fortinbras' command "Let four captains bear Hamlet, like a soldier" the body is borne aloft and solemnly carried across the stage; banners are lowered as the procession passes. Hamlet has died like a warrior and he is accorded the honours of a soldier and hero.

P. Molchanov as Hamlet

THEATRICAL LIBRARY CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

"A priceless treasure house" was Constantine Stanislavsky's description of the State Theatrical Library in Moscow some 15 years ago. And indeed this library, founded a quarter of a century ago, now possesses over 75,000 books on the theatre, 1,500 files of magazines devoted to the stage, more than 35,000 engravings and illustrations, and about 150,000 clippings of newspaper and magazine articles.

A theatre wishing to produce a classical play can find exhaustive data here on the history of its productions. Books, illustrations, and press clippings reconstruct the interpretation of the play by various theatres at different times. The scenic artist is able to study the style of the epoch, interior decorations and costumes while the actor can find interesting reminiscences and reviews to show him how the great masters of the past portrayed the role he now has to perform. The library's consultants offer an excellent bibliographical and advisory service to the problems puzzling the actor, director or artist, service that is free of charge, since the library is state-maintained.

The library takes justified pride in its collections of rare books. Here one can find unique editions of the first Russian plays dating back to the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th. One highly treasured possession is a manuscript copy of Griboyedov's immortal comedy *Wit Works Woe*, which, banned by the tsarist censorship of the time, was circulated in manuscript form. There are files of Russian satirical magazines dating back to the sixties of the last century. The library has the first edition of Dobinyak's essay on the theatre, Carlo Goldoni's memoirs and a collection of theatrical feuilletons by the Goncourt brothers, a bibliographical rarity even in France.

OPERA HOUSE IN NOVOSIBIRSK

In the autumn of 1942, at a time when the Battle of Stalingrad was at its height, Leningrad was still in the iron ring of the siege, and the Ukraine, Belorussia and the Baltic republics were under enemy occupation, the Soviet Government decided to resume construction of the opera house in Novosibirsk, interrupted by the outbreak of war. This theatre, now functioning for more than two years, is one of the largest in the country.

An idea of the size of the auditorium of the Novosibirsk Opera House will be gained from the fact that it is more than twice as large as the gold and scarlet-decorated au-

ditorium of the beautiful Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow.

The Novosibirsk playhouse was opened on May 12, 1945, the first production being Glinka's *Ivan Susanin*. The finale of the opera—Moscow's festively decorated Red Square, a jubilant people celebrating liberation from foreign invaders—was like a paean to the great victory that had been won.

During the past two years 15 productions have been staged, iucluding the operas *Evgeni Onegin*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Carmen*, *Faust*, *The Barber of Seville*, the ballets *Corsaire*, *Swan Lake*, etc. One of the recent additions to the repertoire is Marian Koval's *Men of Sevastopol*. Written in the romantic vein, the opera depicts episodes from the heroic defence of the Black Sea fortress.

An impending production is a ballet for children by the young composer I. Morozov entitled *Doctor Aibolit*, based on fairy tales for the very young by Kornei Chukovsky.

CINEMA

SOVIET SOUND CINEMA TWENTY YEARS OLD

The Soviet cinema has marked an important landmark in its development, the twentieth anniversary of the sound film. It was in 1927 that two Soviet scientists A. Shorin and P. Tager, constructed the first Soviet sound recording and projecting apparatus and the first experimental shorts were produced. Fans literally mobbed their showing at the Art Cinema in Moscow.

The first full length sound films were produced in 1931. These were *The Road to Life* which won world-wide fame and *A Lone Woman*, the story of a teacher who goes to work in a remote village in the Altai. Music for the latter was written by Dmitri Shostakovich.

During the past twenty years a galaxy of Soviet producers, actors and cameramen working on sound films have come to the fore, while music for these films is written by leading Soviet composers.

The sound cinema has made rapid strides. The goal set for 1930 was to equip fifty cinemas for sound. On the eve of the war the Soviet Union had 28,000 cinema installations, besides several thousand at schools and sanatoriums. By 1950 the number of cinema installations is to be brought up to 46,570.

SOVIET AND RUMANIAN STUDIOS PRODUCE JOINT DOCUMENTARY FILM

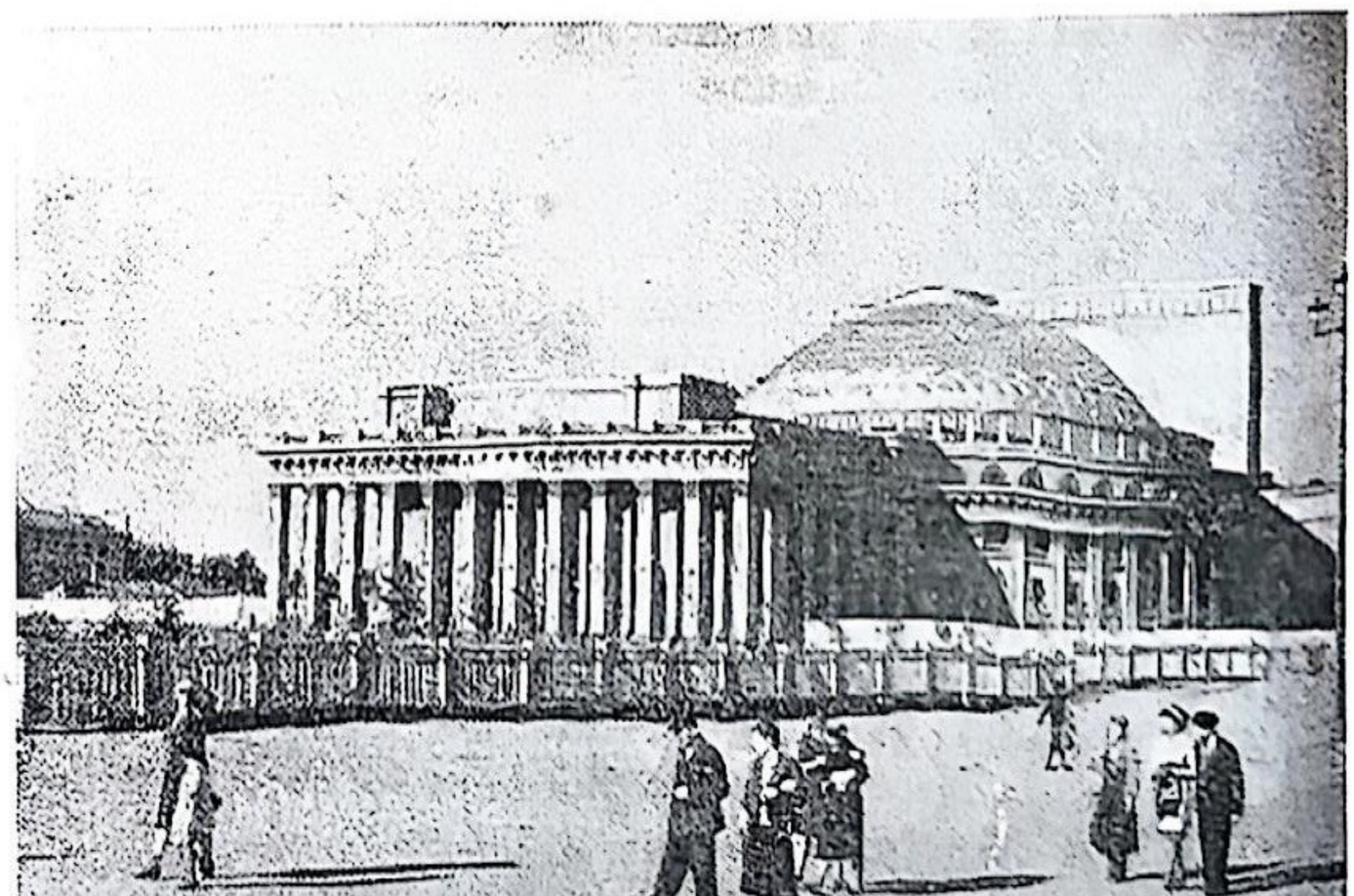
Rumania, a documentary produced jointly by the Central Soviet documentary film studios and the Rumanian Popular Film Studios acquaints the moviegoer with Rumanian history and with life in that country today. It tells of the new path of freedom and democracy chosen by the Rumanian people and the initial successes they have scored.

The history of Rumania goes back into antiquity. Located at the crossroads from Europe to the Near East, it has always been coveted by foreign invaders and merchants. Rumania became an independent state only at the end of the 19th century, after four centuries of Turkish oppression. Russia played a decisive part in the country's liberation.

The section of the film dealing with the past shows the striking contrasts between the fertile fields of the *boyars* and the dwarf plots of the poor peasants, the gaudy luxury of the towns and the squalid life of the toiling people. Foreign monopolies grew rich on tapping the country's natural wealth, while the workers they employed were made to perform the hardest and most menial labour for a pittance.

The film includes shots from old Rumanian newsreels. Shown on the screen is Ion Antonescu, the adventurer who called himself the "Balkan Hitler" and who embroiled his country in war against the Soviet Union. Scenes relating to the early days of the war show the boom on the Bucharest stock exchange, fascist speakers gloating over the rich booty awaiting the invaders in Odessa and the fertile lands of the Ukraine which they renamed Transistria.

After smashing enemy resistance on the Prut River in April 1944, Soviet troops entered



New theatre in Novosibirsk

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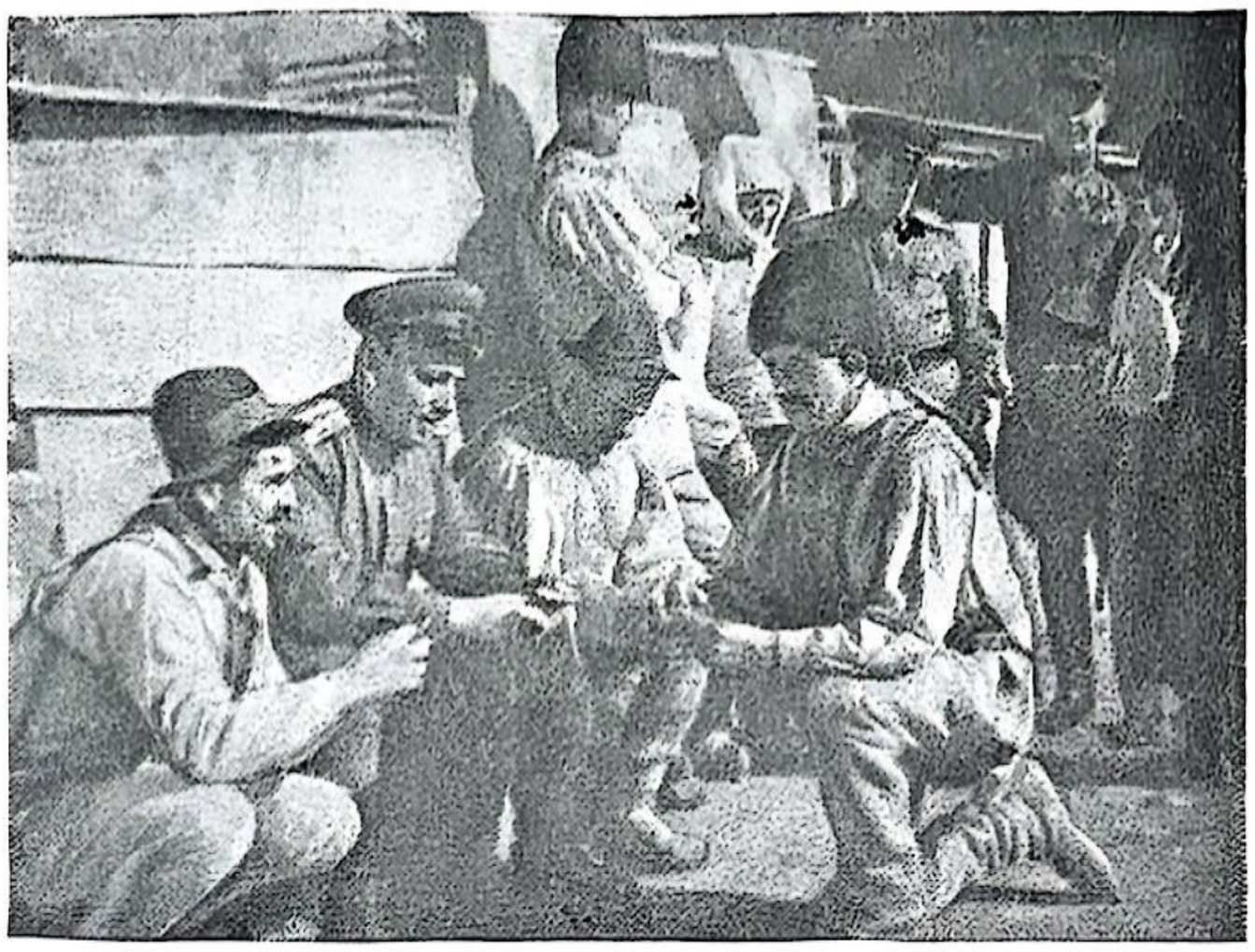

Still from the film **Rumania**

Rumanian territory. In August 1944 the Rumanian army turned its bayonets against the German fascist troops. From then until the end of the war Rumanians fought shoulder to shoulder with Russians, just as their fathers had done in 1916 and their grandfathers in 1877.

The most interesting section of the film is the one showing the regeneration of Rumania. The spectator sees the statesmen now guiding the destinies of the new, democratic Rumania, Petru Groza, Georgiu Dej and others as well as outstanding men of arts and sciences. The new government gave land to the peasantry who thus became masters of the soil that their forebears had tilled for centuries. Views of ploughed fields and orchards in bloom flash on the screen. A life of peace and of creative endeavour has dawned for the Rumanian people.

ART

AN IMPORTANT LANDMARK IN RUSSIAN ART

Soviet artists recently observed an important date in the history of Russian art—the 75th anniversary of the "Peredvizhniki" (Travellers) movement which aimed to bring to the people the finest works by masters of the brush.

The roots of the "Peredvizhniki" movement extend back into the sixties of the last century when the progressive democratic movement embraced all phases of social life in Russia.

In 1863 a group of students of the St. Petersburg Arts Academy, headed by Ivan Kramskoy, embarked on a struggle against the prevailing pseudo-classical ideals of court painting that were completely alien to the people. Their aim was to achieve realism in Russian pictorial art. The young artists declined to take part in a contest on a mythological theme (Feast in Valhalla) and asked for the right to choose their own subjects. When this was refused, they withdrew from the Academy and organized an "artists' society." During the summer months they visited the countryside bringing back landscape paintings, sketches and portraits.

Several years later, Moscow artists conceived the idea of organizing a "Society of Travelling Exhibitions" (Tovarishchestvo Peredvizhnikh Vystavok), whose chief aim was to organize itinerant exhibitions and in this way bring their art to the people. At the end of 1871, the first exhibition was organized and was transferred to Moscow a year later.

"The current year was marked by a very significant phenomenon for Russian art: some Moscow and St. Petersburg artists formed a society whose object it is to organize travelling art exhibitions in all towns of Russia. This means that works of Russian art, until now confined to the walls of the Arts Academy in St. Petersburg, or buried in private galleries and museums, will become accessible to all . . ." wrote Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, the satirist.

Thus began the activities of a progressive social organization of Russian artists which for more than 50 years united the finest painters of Russia. The "Peredvizhniki" sought after a style comprehensible to the people; that style was realism.

The best canvases of Russian painters were displayed by the "Peredvizhniki", Ilya Repin, Vassili Surikov, Constantine Savrasov, Ivan Shishkin, Arkhip Kuinji, Isaac Levitan and Valentine Serov taking part in the exhibitions.

MISCELLANEOUS

RESTORATION OF ANCIENT CATHEDRAL

The present restoration of St. Basil's Cathedral, one of Moscow's most outstanding memorials, is designed to bring this famous specimen of old Russian architecture back to its original state.

The picturesque silhouette of the cathedral with its bulbous-coloured domes, sharply etched against the Moscow skyline, can be seen from afar, from the flat banks of Zamoskvorechye on the other side of the river as well as from the spacious Gorky Street. Standing in the Red Square close to the ancient walls of the Kremlin, the church was built in 1556-1560 by order of Ivan the Terrible to commemorate the capture of Kazan. Barma and Postnik, two Russian master builders, planned it as a configuration of four

St Basil's Cathedral in Moscow

large churches in the shape of a cross, facing the four ends of the world. Between the four churches a similar number of smaller ones was erected, the whole forming an octagon in whose centre was the main, the ninth church. The cathedral was called Pokrovsky after the festival of *Pokrov*, on which day the Kazan Fortress fell. In subsequent years the harmonious architectural composition was violated by the building of additional structures giving the church an odd and fanciful shape.

A broad stone staircase, worn by age and use leads into the cathedral. Nearly four centuries ago these steps were mounted by Ivan the Terrible. As the heavy iron-encased doors slowly open, one is transported from present-day Moscow into the mysterious twilight of the 16th century. The cathedral is now a museum and silence reigns under its onion-shaped domes, where once the tiny flares of wax candles threw their trembling shadow upon the gold-plated icons.

The cathedral was built of brick and stone in an age when wood predominated in the construction of both churches and homes. For this reason the stone and brick were fashioned to imitate wood. Stones were hewed to resemble logs and ornaments from brick were given the shape of elongated wooden beads or carved wooden flower petals. It is only when one touches them that he feels the cold of stone instead of the texture of wood.

In the 17th century quaint frescoes appeared on the cathedral walls: flowers, leaves and ornaments in striking reds, yellows, blues and greens. Not a single flower or ornament done by hand resembles the next one and this imparts a natural, life-like quality to the painting.

Soviet restorers scraping away the painting in one of the porticoes found that originally two colours predominated in the cathedral, the white of the stone and the red of the brick. There is a beautiful array of red, ranging from a soft pink to blood red. The red background is intersected with white stripes of lime and the brick work carries clear traces of a simple ornament woven of rosettes and flower petals.

Semi-darkness prevails in the cathedral with light streaming in only through the narrow slits of elongated windows and in the dark passageways mica lanterns hang suspended from heavy iron chains.

As he glances upward the visitor's attention is arrested by the large orifices high in the walls close to the domes. These are clay vessels built into the walls to act as sound absorbers. This simple and ingenious acoustic device made it possible to conduct services in all the nine churches simultaneously with none of the noise being carried from one to another along the connecting passageways.

Historians also discovered other "secrets" of the ancient master builders. In one of the passageways they found a flat brick roof, the only one known to have been erected in the 16th century. This was a unique achievement in those days when all brick roofs were vaulted. The roof of Barma and Postnik is held together solely by a lime mortar. Nothing is known now about this binding material besides the fact that it was aged for many years in special barrels kept in monastery cellars or storehouses of the tsars.

The stone and brick cathedral has well withstood the passage of time. Pitched battles were fought near its walls in 1612 when the Russians were driving out foreign invaders entrenched in the Kremlin. It survived the great fire which destroyed two-thirds of Moscow in 1628. In 1812 when Napoleon's troops captured Moscow, the French soldiers used the churches as stables. During the second world war a German fire bomb broke through a cathedral wall but it burned out without starting a fire.

The extensive restoration work now under way is gradually removing the "improvements" made throughout the centuries. Stonework erected in the lower sections and outer galleries is to be cleared away. The splendid architectural memorial is regaining its original appearance and inimitable beauty.

The "rejuvenation" of St. Basil's Cathedral is supervized by Academician Dmitri Sukhov who has been its custodian for the past 51 years. The scientist who knows every stone and crevice in the church is a recognized authority on ancient Russia and the author of many scientific studies.

Work on the cathedral is financed by the state and is part of the general program on a countrywide scale to preserve and restore valuable memorials of the past.

Editor-in-chief: ALEXANDER KARAGANOV